**My Own Private War**december 2015, IKONdocs

Credits

Director: Lidija Zelovic

Editor: Alexander Goekjian

Script: Lidija Zelovic and Rogier Kappers

Camera: Alexander Goekjian, Marinus Groothof, Lidija Zelovic and Tatjana Bozic

Sound: Sam Simons and Rogier Kappers

Additional editing: Srdjan Fink

Graphic design, animation: Rogério Lira

Sound design: Nenad Simsic

Sound assistant: Milorad Icitovic

Grading: Gerhard van der Beek

Radio voice: David de Jongh

Editor in chief: Margje de Koning

Producer: Margie Monfils

Logline

*‘Mama, what is the difference between good and bad?’*

What happens when collective trauma enters a family? A story told from the personal experience of the filmmaker.

Short synopsis

What happens to a family long after a war is over? Can one ensure that their children don’t have to carry their burden?

In this very personal documentary Lidija Zelovic makes an inner journey through her memories, places and people she loves. Meanwhile she tries to leave her past behind her.

During the making of this film Zelovic finds that the real war is raging within people. Even inside herself.

Synopsis

How do you get to terms with your war history? And how can you ensure that your children don’t have to carry this burden?

In this very personal documentary Lidija Zelovic tries to answer this question. Zelovic grew up in the Bosnian city Sarajevo, then still Yugoslavia, where the civil war of 1992 divided the population. In 1993, she fled to the Netherlands. As a war correspondent for the BBC and later as a filmmaker, she kept trying to get closer to the truth about war.

What happens to a family long after the war is over? During the making of this film Zelovic finds that the real war is raging within people. Even inside herself.

To try and leave the past behind and no longer feel like a refugee, Zelovic tries to identify the source of hostility.

She gets in touch with a cousin who was a sniper during the war, speaks with a journalist friend who was close to Mladic and goes on a holiday with her son back to the family roots. And while her son seems to be having the time of his life, the struggle within Lidija is increasing.

Trailer

<https://vimeo.com/161160987>

Screener

<https://vimeo.com/158631076>

Password: IkonVideo2000!

Bibliography director

Lidija Zelovic (1970) was born and raised in the land of milk and honey, Yugoslavia. She studied Yugoslav literature and Serbo-Croatian language. When the war started in Yugoslavia her home was no longer the land of milk and honey. There was no Yugoslav literature anymore and there was even less of the Serbo-Croatian language. So she left.

Lidija became a refugee in The Netherlands. She felt that she had so much to say but her strongest weapon - language - became inadequate. Her Serbo-Croatian became useless and even tough she learned how to speak Dutch, it will never be what it should be to really express how she feels. Lidija needed to find another tool. She went back to university to study again, this time ‘Film and TV sciences’. This is how Lidja Zelovic became a film director.

Filmography director

(Selected Filmography, script and/or directing)

**My Own Private War** (2015 / 60 min / IKON / NL)

**Yassine Goes To Syria** (2014 / 60 min / VPRO / NL)

**The House That Fata Never Built** (2012 / 50 min / ALJAZEERA / QA)

**My Friends** (2006 / 60 min / IKON / NL)

**Just Another Day** (2005 / 60 min / IKON / NL)

**Doctors In The Waiting Room** (2004 / 35 min / IKON / NL)

**End Game** (2003 / 50 min / RVU / NL)

**Once Upon A Time There Was A Country** (1998 / 9 min / NPS / NL)

Reactions

**This documentary fails and is beautiful**

An ingenious video essay about war and about us - *people*.  
(Vrij Nederland / Sander Pleij / 16-12-2015)

￼Now she is this petite woman on roller skates, skating through Amsterdam. With a son, a husband and a shining city around her. Carefree she skates past you, seemingly unconcerned.

In Sarajevo she was someone else. A girl not worried about her visibility. An only daughter in a world of girly fantasies protected by a brother, father, cousins, all men around her.

Chosen she was, she started as announcer on TV. Yes, she wore a beautiful dress with shoulder pads and sat at a table with a doily. Flowers on the desk and a houseplant in the corner, announcing reports on autumn. Asking people: do you also like the sound of the leaves crackling under your shoes when you walk?

In five days everyone changed.

War breaks out. She can flee. She arrives in Amsterdam on April 30, the Queen’s birthday. Everything is absurd. The people are drunk, dressed in orange they throw eggs and do weird games. She wants to shake them and scream "IT'S WAR! Here, two hours away! '

On the street the partying masses, on TV the shooting of her family. She cannot understand why her life is suddenly gone. When she has a son, a new life, her parents in the Netherlands, she keeps returning to the war, documenting as much as possible. Only when she is seized by soldiers in Kosovo, her thinking is blocked, and survival instinct is all she is.

In this film we see her trying to make a final "true and honest film about the war." How she talks with her favourite cousin who shot as sniper at his own besieged Sarajevo. How she cannot find Muslim friends. She talks to her parents, her family, who suddenly have become Serbs who stand for the Serbs. In the hometown of Mladić scenes with her good friend who made the reports we all know from Srebrenica. And who still believes in Mladić innocence. How she cannot bridge the gap. She wants everyone's story. All truths. Everything.

Oh, how she fails. A spectacular failure.

And yet – fear no happy ending! – her beautifully filmed essay has got something: many new questions (How important is reconciliation actually? How important is punishment? What is most important for now in those regions? To what extent can one and when can one not choose ones identity?

Many new questions, seemingly unanswerable, take us back to the human dimension.

That is her credit: she has made people human again.

Link to article: <https://www.vn.nl/deze-documentaire-faalt-en-is-prachtig/>

Synopsis according to [Visions du Réel](https://www.visionsdureel.ch)

This documentary is about a Sarajevo Serb family emigrated to the Netherlands at the beginning of the civil war in Yugoslavia. The filmmaker followed the conflict and its consequences for years as a journalist. Today she returns to the subject in a personal approach, to settle accounts with the country she was born in.

Rich in archival material, My Own Private War stands as one of the most honest investigations so far on this topic. This is thanks to the approach of the filmmaker,

to convince us, her stubbornness, her conscience, her decision to put herself in it. Back in Bosnia, she meets a cousin who was a sniper during the war, a journalist who followed Mladic closely, her relatives, around a table, talking about the past and present ... gradually, as the film progresses, something of the nature of non-reconciliation surfaces: the filmmaker wants understand and find peace, but she cannot ... Maybe she never can.

Admittedly touched by a collective responsibility, My Own Private War ends as being the film of an impossible love, against fear and hate.