



OFFICIAL SELECTION
**INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM**
2020



KALA AZAR

By Janis Rafa

**The Netherlands, Greece
2020 | 85' | Colour**



LOGLINE

A young couple's ritualistic job routine of collecting and cremating animal bodies from their owners and the roadkill that they come across is challenged when they cause an accident themselves.

SYNOPSIS

At the margins of a city somewhere in the south of Europe, a young couple start their day with their job routine: collecting deceased pets from their owners in order to cremate them and return their ashes. This paid job aside, they also collect and cremate roadkill found as they drive around in their car, which also seems to be their home. In this endless life cycle, human beings and animals coexist harmoniously, until the couple causes a roadkill themselves.

Set against a visually stunning and desolate landscape with an eerie sensuality, Kalaazar is a film about death and life itself.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Growing up during the 1990s in Greece, in a family surrounded by pets that were often collected from the streets in order to escape stray life, is the starting point of this biographical screenplay. The archetypes of the father and the mother were distinguishable outside an anthropocentric understanding, in which my parents were taking care of those beings and holding a strong standpoint towards a culture that was marginalising them. Through the years, seeing my father repetitively as the gravedigger of those beings in the garden of our house is an image that haunts me in my work.

Understanding loss, firstly through human-animal relationships in this familial context, allowed me to observe and emotionally attempt to comprehend the life-circles of different species. Apart from pets that died naturally, a great number would die prematurely. Kala azar was the main cause to loose several of our dogs in a period of five years. Kala azar is a parasite killer, spread on dogs through the bite of a female sand fly that needs a blood meal for her eggs to mature. It was then, when Kala azar became an endemic disease and was introduced in the Greek territory and the Mediterranean region. It found dog owners completely unprepared and in shock after the mass spreading of the parasite and the numerous deaths.

A decade later, within this never fully modernised urban landscape, I would encounter another form of animal loss while travelling for work at the outskirts of the urban: continuous roadkill, shot birds, abandoned bodies of farm or pet animals and stray dogs



surrendered to the disease, all of which visible to the passing eye. Certainly this deathly aura outdoors, evoked another reading of the city and of humanity.

It is a fiction film linked to the particularities of a place's history, geography and time, which is the place I grew up; nevertheless, it is shot in a way that aims to maintain a universal and timeless approach. Kala azar is a film on the paradox of life-circles and relationships between beings of different species.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Lives and works between Amsterdam and Athens. She completed her education in Fine Art (BA, MA, PhD) at the University of Leeds supported by AHRC. Her body of work spans from experimental moving image practices, to video-essays, sculptures, environmental installations, cinematic narratives and most recently medium and feature length films. She completed the Rijksakademie residency in 2013-2014 with a scholarship by Onassis Foundation, followed by Künstlerhaus Villa Concordia residency in 2017-2018. She has participated at the Feature Expanded program, organised by HOME and Lo Schermo dell'arte in 2017 and won the Feature Expanded Distribution Award. She is in development of her first feature film Kala azar (2020) awarded with De Verbeelding by Mondriaan Fonds, Netherland Film Fonds and supported by Greek Film Center, ERT, AFK and Abraham Tuschinskifonds. Her second



solo was presented at Martin van Zomeren Gallery in 2016 followed by a solo exhibition at Centraal Museum Utrecht in 2018/19, curated by Laurie Cluitmans. Her work is part of the following collections: Stedelijk Museum, Centraal Museum, Museum Voorlinden.

Her work has been shown at Galleria delle Carrozze di Palazzo Medici Riccardi (2017); Centre d'art contemporain Chanot (2017); Benaki Museum (2017); EYE Film Institute (2016); Kunstfort Vijfhuizen (2016); VISIO European Program on Artists' Moving Images (2015); 56th Venice Biennial (parallel event, 2015); ART-O-RAMA (2014); State Museum of Contemporary Art (2011); Manifesta 8 (2010); Whitechapel Gallery & Project Space Leeds (collaborative project, 2009); Thessaloniki Biennial of Contemporary Art (2009), among other venues.

Her films and video works were screened at Netherlands Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, BFI, Cinema de la Nouvelle Lune, Curtas Vila do Conde, Gulf Film Festival, Capalbio Cinema, and as part of Rencontres Internationales (2016, 2010, 2014).

Her films and videos balance between an empirical perception of landscapes and events and an authentic representation of them. Her narratives are located at the margins of the urban, haunted by stray dogs, roadkill, fatal accidents and dissipated death. The



cryptic and universal nature of these cinematic worlds is initiated by a certain realism that has very little to do with its usual representation. Dead and living, human and non-human coexist in an accord of dream and sensuality. This is the land of her semi-autobiographic narrations; returns to personal histories that reveal something of the subsequent carving of a place's fiction and not necessarily of the place itself.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

2755 miles | 2009 | short

Dad where are you? | 2010 | short

Exit K1 | 2012 | short

Three Farewells | 2013 | film trilogy

Requiem to a Shipwreck | 2014 | short

Requiem to a Fatal Incident | 2015 | short

This Thin Crust of Earth | 2016 | short

Kala azar | 2020 | feature

MAIN CREDITS

Directed by | Janis Rafa

Written by | Janis Rafa

Cinematography | Thodoros Mihopoulos

Editing | Patrick Minks

Cast | Pinelopi Tsilika (female), Dimitris Lalos (male), Michelle Valley (mother), Tassos Rafailidis (father), Oğuz Han Kaya (Oğuz), Gökhan Kaya (worker), Maria Alliferi (woman with dead fish), Adrian Frieling (brother with dead bird #1), Martin Benge (brother with dead bird #2), Nikos Pantelidis (director of crematorium), Antonis Tsiotsiopoulos (hunter), Pavlos Kourtidis (security guard at crematorium), Lenika Arfani (veterinarian)

Produced by | SNG Film (The Netherlands)

Co-produced by | Heretic (Greece)

Supported by | Netherlands Film Fonds, Greek Film Centre, ERT

Producers | Digna Sinke

Co-producers | Konstantinos Kontovrakis, Giorgos Karnavas

Production manager | Leda Bouzoukou

Production design | Elena Vardava

Costumes by | Vasilis Barbarigos

Make-up | Sissi Petropoulou

Music | LOOR / Gwilym Sainsbury

Sound | Nikos Kostantinou

Sound mix | Marc Lizier

Assistant director | Evdokia Kalamitsi, Stevi Panagiotaki

Production assistant | Takis Papadopoulos

World sales | Heretic Outreach

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