

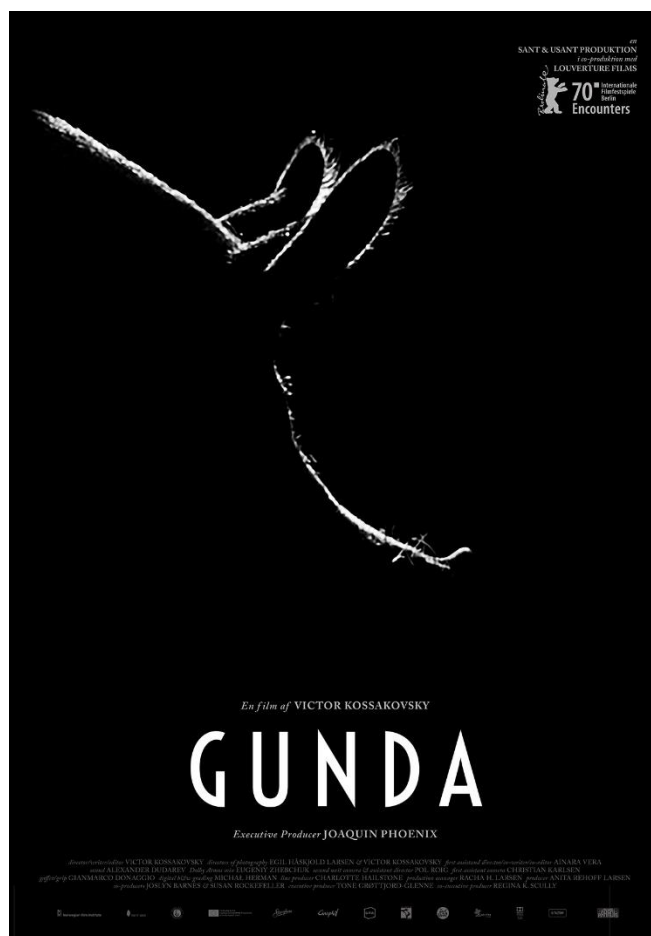
PRESSEMATERIALE:



Øst for Paradis præsenterer:

GUNDA

En film af Victor Kossakovsky



Produceret af Anita Rehoff Larsen, Co-Produced by Joslyn Barnes, Susan Rockefeller
Executive Producer **Joaquin Phoenix**

2020 /Norge/USA /sort-hvid/uden dialog/93 min.

PREMIERE: 1. juli 2021

PRESSEVISNING: 17. juni kl. 9.30 i Grand

Pressebilleder: <http://distribution.paradisbio.dk/film.asp?id=336>

EPK klip: <https://paradis.digitalepk.dk> Brugernavn: presse - password: film

Øst for Paradis Filmimport
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CPH:DOX SKRIVER:

"Hvert år slagter vi mennesker cirka 70 milliarder landbrugsdyr. I sin nye film lader den russiske mesterinstruktør Viktor Kossakovsky kameraet dvæle ved ét enkelt af disse dyr – soen Gunda – og de andre grise, høns og køer, der udgør hendes nærmeste omgangskreds. Der er ingen ekspert-interviews i 'Gunda', som er lige så langt fra dokumentarfilmens konventioner som instruktørens storladne klima-hit 'Aquarela' var. Men ved at lade os betragte dyrenes adfærd i blændende smukke, sort-hvide billeder lader Kossakovsky os forstå, at der er både intelligens og følelser inde bag trynen, næbbet, mulen."

**STATEMENTS FRA JOAQUIN PHOENIX & PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON**

"GUNDA er et bjergtagende perspektiv på dyrs evne til at føle. Et perspektiv der – måske bevidst – er skjult for os. Filmen viser stolthed og ærbødighed, fornøjelighed og en gris' nysgerrige unger; grisens panik, fortvivlelse og nederlag, da hun opdager det ultimative bedrag, og disse er eksempler på, hvor ens vi arter reagerer og håndterer situationer i vores respektive liv. Victor Kossakovsky har udført en altopslugende meditation over eksistens, som transcenderer de grænser, der normalvis opdeler arterne. Det er en utroligt vigtig og kunstnerisk film."

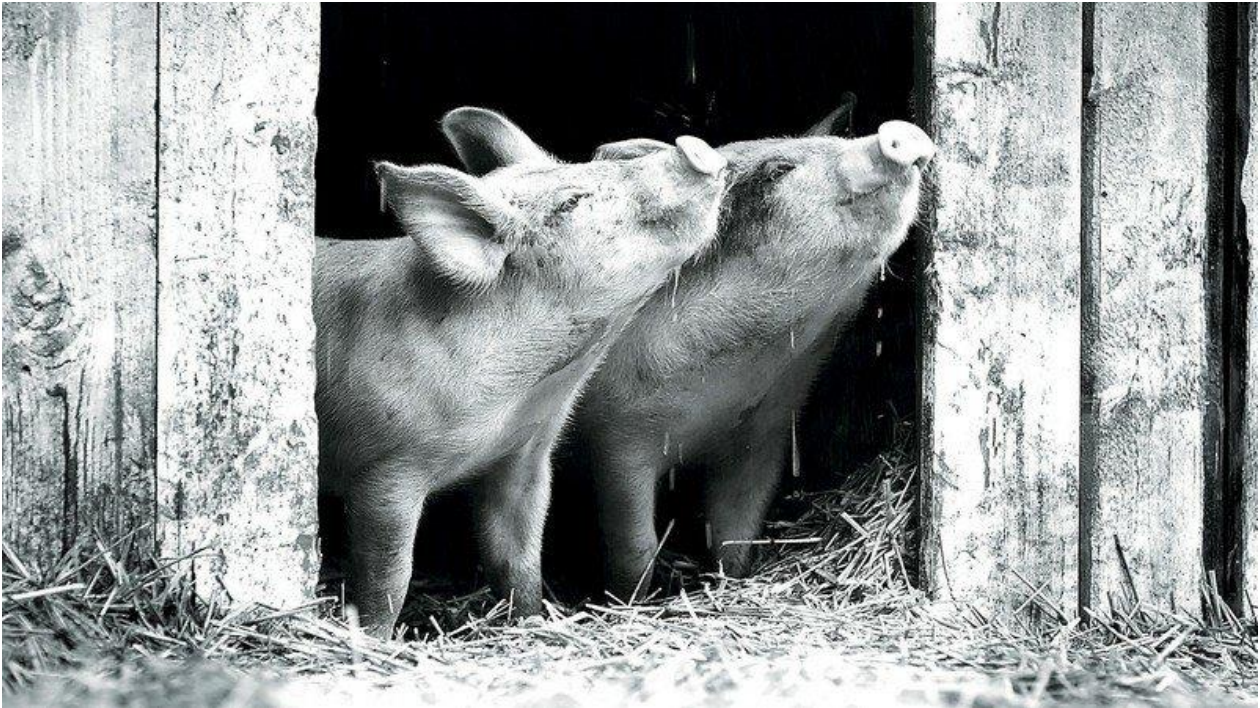
- Joaquin Phoenix, Executive Producer

"GUNDA er ren filmkunst. Det er en film, som du kan tage et bad i – den er strippet for essentielle elementer og er uden forstyrrelser. Den er hvad vi alle – filmskabere som publikum – burde stræbe efter; billeder og lyd sat sammen til at fortælle en kraftfuld og ægte historie uden hast. Dens bjergtagende billeder og lyd sat sammen med det bedste ensemble udgør mere en trylledrik end en film"

- Paul Thomas Anderson

KORT SYNOPSIS

Hvor hans tidligere film *AQUARELA* var en fortælling om menneskets skrøbelighed her på jorden, minder Viktor Kossakovsky os denne gang om, at vi bebor denne klode sammen med milliarder af andre dyr. Gennem møder med mor-grisen Gunda, en gruppe køer og en etbenet kylling, kalibrerer Kossakovsky vores moralske univers og viser os værdien af livet og mysteriet bag dyrs bevidsthed – inklusiv os mennesker.



LANG SYNOPSIS

Vi deler vores verden med millioner af landbrugsdyr. Alligevel har vi i et industrialiseret samfund lært at ignorere disse dyrs evne til at føle, og vi ser dem ofte som en passiv ressource. Instruktør Victor Kossakovsky tilbyder os med *GUNDA* et re-kalibreret, moralsk univers, hvor vi bliver mindet om værdien af liv hos alle levende væsener.

Ved at indtage en gris' perspektiv, lytte til en kos stille muhen eller observere en kylling, der findes dens vinger for første gang, undgår Kossakovsky enhver forudindtagethed omkring, at vi mennesker skulle være unikke pga. vores evne til at føle følelser, bevidsthed og vilje. Når vi nedsænkes i disse dyrs liv, der leves

fuldt ud med både glæde og sorg, bliver det uundgåeligt at se, at menneskeheden er nødt til at undergå store ændringer for at slutte den masseudnyttelse, der udføres på andre levende væsener. *GUNDA* er Kossakovskys dybt personlige forsøg på at forny vores syn på liv og tænke over mysteriet bag dyrs bevidsthed – inklusiv vores egen.

INSTRUKTØREN VIKTOR KOSSAKOVSKY FORTÆLLER

”Da jeg voksede op, var jeg i høj grad et storbybarn, men da jeg var fire år, tilbragte jeg et par måneder på landet, hvor jeg mødte min bedste ven Vasya. Han var meget yngre end mig – kun et par uger gammel, da vi først mødtes – men blev over tid min allerbedste ven, og den tid vi tilbragte sammen, er nogle af de bedste barndoms minder, jeg har.”

”En dag, da vi stadig var børn, blev Vasya slået ihjel og serveret som svinekoteletter til en nytårsaften. Jeg var knust og blev (måske) det første vegetariske barn i Sovjetunionen.”

”Som en konsekvens heraf har jeg, lige siden jeg begyndte at skabe film, haft et ønske om at lave en film om de skabninger med hvem vi deler jordkloden; en film om dyr som levende væsener med deres egne rettigheder. Jeg ville lave en film uden hverken at behandle dem nedladende eller menneskeliggøre dem, uden sentimentalitet og uden vegansk propaganda. Siden den film jeg havde i tankerne ikke skulle handle om delfiner, elefanter, pandaer eller andre nuttede dyr, som vi elsker at holde af, var det stort set umuligt at finansiere projektet. Jeg prøvede i næsten tre årtier, indtil jeg endelig mødte den norske producer Anita Rehoff fra Sant & Usant, som tog en risiko ved at lave filmen.”



”Vi var så utroligt heldige at møde Gunda ude på landet i Norge på vores allerførste researchdag. Gunda er på skærmen i over halvdelen af filmens varighed og er en utroligt stærk karakter: Du behøver ikke en tolk for at forstå hendes følelser og oplevelser. Af samme grund besluttede jeg mig for at lave filmen helt uden tekster, voice-over eller musik, og du skal bare se den og tillade dig selv at føle. For mig er essensen i filmkunsten at vise noget og ikke fortælle det. Jeg laver ikke film, fordi jeg gerne vil fortælle publikum noget, og jeg har ikke nogen interesse i at udskrive en mening til dem. Jeg laver film, hvis der er noget, som jeg gerne vil have folk til at se og tillader dem at finde deres egen konklusion. Dokumentargenren er et godt

værktøj til at vise realiteterne i verden og vise ting, som vi ikke ser af os selv, ikke ønsker at se eller som vi kollektivt er blevet enige om ikke at se og dermed ikke tænke over.

”Med GUNDA vil jeg have publikum til at se dyr som sansende væsner og opfordre dem til at tænke over muligheden der hermed ligger for bevidsthed og individualitet. Jeg føler, at GUNDA er den mest personlige og vigtige film, som jeg har lavet som filmskaber og menneske.”

- Victor Kossakovsky



INSTRUKTØR - Victor Kossakovsky

Victor Kossakovsky blev født i Sankt Petersborg (dengang Leningrad) d. 19. juli 1961.

Han er en innovativ filmskaber, og hans film har vundet mere end 100 priser på nationale og internationale festivaller. Hans filmografi spænder over mange forskellige emner men undersøger altid samspillet mellem virkelighed og poetiske øjeblikke.

Han startede sin filmkarriere ved Leningrad Studio of Documentaries som assisterende kamerafører, assisterende instruktør og klipper i 1978. Han studerede filmmanuskript og instruktion i Moskva fra 1986-1988. I 1989 instruerede han sin første spillefilm LOSEV, og i 1992 blev hans navn kendt ved internationale

kritikere og publikum med hans dokumentar THE BELOVS som vandt både en VPRO Joris Ivens Award og publikumsprisen ved IDFA samt mange andre priser ved internationale festivaller rundt omkring i verden. I 2011 blev Kossakovskys ¡VIVAN LAS ANTIPODAS! udvalgt som åbningsfilm til filmfestivalen i Venedig. AQUARELA, hans teknologisk banebrydende og verdensomspændende dokumentar om vandets former, havde også premiere i Venedig i 2018, inden den blev shortlistet til en Oscar for Bedste Dokumentar, ligesom GUNDA også var det.

I mange af hans film agerer Kossakaovsky både instruktør, klipper og forfatter. Han bor på nuværende tidspunkt i Berlin, hvor han også arbejder som underviser og mentor for aspirerende filmskabere og dokumentarister fra hele verden.

CREDITS

Instruktør/forfatter/klipper: VICTOR KOSSAKOVSKY

Foto: EGIL HÅSKJOLD LARSEN & VICTOR KOSSAKOVSKY

Første assistent: AINARA VERA

Lyd: ALEXANDR DUDAREV

Kamera: POL ROIG & CHRISTIAN KARLSEN

Grip: GIANMARCO DONAGGIO

Digital b&w grading: MICHAŁ HERMAN

Line producer: CHARLOTTE HAILSTONE

Production manager: RACHA H. LARSEN

Producer: ANITA REHOFF LARSEN

Co-producers: JOSLYN BARNES & SUSAN ROCKEFELLER

Executive producers: JOAQUIN PHOENIX, TONE GRØTTJORD-GLENNE

Co-executive producer: REGINA K. SCULLY

Støttet af:

DET NORSKE FILMINSTITUT, THE FRITT ORD FOUNDATION, ARTEMIS RISING

FOUNDATION, THE MEDIA PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, EMPATHY ARTS

I samarbejde med STORYLINE STUDIOS HAILSTONE FILMS

Distributør: ØST FOR PARADIS

SAMTALE MED VICTOR KOSSAKOVSKY – PÅ ENGELSK

Your last film, *AQUARELA* looked at the majesty and power of nature through water in its various forms around the world. Here, you show the intimacy of nature in several farms. In both, there appears to be a conflict between human activity and its environment. Do you see a common thread between these two films in terms of humanity's attitude toward nature?

There absolutely is a common thread. In fact, I would include ¡VIVAN LAS ANTÍPODAS! along with *AQUARELA* and now *GUNDA* in a loose trilogy. Having travelled extensively around the world, which I certainly did for these films, I met people who look different, feel differently, and think differently, and in the course of making these films I became a different person. I realized that what is often missing in our attitude towards our surroundings is respect – for people, for the environment, and certainly for the animals who we share this planet with. I know that I cannot change this world, that my films cannot change this world, but still I felt I had to do something. I cannot stop people from doing what they do, but perhaps I can at least make them look more closely at what it is they are denying or destroying.

Historically there is an overall acceptance by humanity that we have dominion over non-humans, that their lives are inherently less valuable than ours, do you see *GUNDA* as a repudiation of that?

My idea is very simple: we as humans are ready to change our attitudes to our fellow beings. That might be a very optimistic perspective, but at least there are some hints as to why it might be possible. When I wrote the script, I hadn't yet read "21 Lessons for the 21st Century", the book by Yuval Harari. After reading it, however, I found some of its theses very similar to what I was trying to express.

Human attitudes do change over time, and I would like to think we can learn certain things from our experiences. For a few hundred years, it was important to establish respect for the value of human life. It took centuries to even acknowledge that all human beings deserve the same rights. Perhaps now we can take the next step and admit that every living creature has similar rights. Pigs, butterflies, elephants – all of them have the same rights to live on this planet. We shouldn't always put ourselves in the center. We can do better than that. We are not totally awful. We did eventually come to the conclusion that slavery was unjust, we have started to respect the rights of women, of people of different genders, and to me that is a sign that we are increasing our understanding of the world.

How did you choose the remarkable animals in this film?

When I was a kid – I must have been four years old – I spent some months with relatives

in the country, and they had Vasya, a piglet who became my friend, he obviously was an intelligent creature who loved me and whom I loved in return. That certainly influenced the choice of having Gunda as my main character. We met Gunda on the very first day of our research. Normally, I spend a lot of time before I discover the heart of my film. In this case, I opened the door to the pigsty, Gunda came towards me, and I told my producer Anita Rehoff Larsen: We have found our Meryl Streep.

Other farm animals have accompanied me step by step throughout my life. In my film THE BELOVS (1992), the main character is milking her cow and when she is done, she kisses the cow and tells her: “Thank you very much for your milk.” She had such a profound and beautiful relationship with her animals, based on what I can only describe as mutual respect. When the media talk about animals, it’s often about popularly beloved creatures like whales, pandas, dolphins or koala bears – I didn’t want cute animals. I felt that would detract from the larger message. There are billions of pigs, and almost all of them will live a year at most. 1.5 billion cows we will kill after two to four years. 50 billion chickens each year will not even live to be one year old. We don’t think about this much. Try a thought experiment: imagine creatures stronger than us – a race of supermen, of aliens, more intelligent than us, who will take our babies after they are born to feed them and kill them. This is what we do to animals. History is written by the victors. We “won” the history of the earth for now, but who knows what happens next.

What common misconceptions does human society attach to ‘farm animals’ in terms of their emotional and intellectual capacity?

Our entire treatment of animals is based on misconception. In some countries there are laws stating outright that animals don’t suffer - it’s written into the very fabric of the law. This is absurd. Everyone who is in regular contact with animals knows that they feel, they have emotions, they are conscious. We know this is the truth but have tacitly agreed to disregard our empirical knowledge. Instead we deny them their natural lives.

Just as an example, in GUNDA you can see how much time animals spend digging in the ground. In factory farms they live on concrete floors and have no chance to dig, to behave like they normally would. Cows can live ten or twenty years. We kill them after 3-4 years or even younger. In GUNDA, you see an old cow - think about how insane it is that most people will never have seen an old cow! She has lived a full life, she has a destiny, and she communicates all of this only through her eyes, through the way she looks at us. One cannot miss this if one looks attentively. If people believe that humans have souls, they should agree that animals have souls too.

The shots you captured showing the relationship between mother and children in this particular family of swine are amazing. Did it take a lot of patience waiting for those moments to reveal themselves?

Normally, what I do when I start a film is, I read a lot of books, I talk to scientists, and I try to learn everything about my subject. This helps to know when something important is about to happen. For example, I learned from the literature that just before giving birth, a mother sow's breathing and heart rate will change. We monitored her for those signs. Still, it takes time to simply observe, but to me, this is endlessly fascinating if I have the right subjects.

What challenges did you encounter filming the animals? How did you physically shoot the scenes inside the pig's hut?

We built an exact copy of Gunda's pigsty, but with removable panels. We could go around a full 360 degrees without being physically in the hut ourselves. The lens was inside, we weren't, so we wouldn't disturb the pigs. But it was less of a challenge than it might have been, because she was friendly and patient with us and let us observe her. The film has no human dialogue, no score, and no on-screen text. Can you explain why you chose to keep to animal sounds as the only audio and to not explain with captions? Many films are made about animals, and normally, they feature people talking about them, explaining them. That takes the attention away from the animals. I didn't want to patronize or humanize them. Films that show animal slaughter and explain all its gory detail also don't work. It is propaganda, and people block it out. So, I thought, let's see what the camera can do on its own. Just look! Cinema is made for this, to make you see what you might not be able to see normally. Cinema can provide an emotional, experiential approach to a topic. It seemed the right approach to go back to the beginning of cinema. I didn't want to introduce extraneous elements such as a score. I wanted to show how animals communicate. If you look closely, Gunda speaks to us. I didn't want to drown her voice.

What informed your decision to shoot the film in black and white?

The decision to shoot in black and white was made for a similar reason. For one thing, this brings me back to the origin of cinema, to the birth of cinema. Also, depending on the circumstances, color can be overwhelming. If you see blood in color, it is too naturalistic and your attention wanders. Often, lush colors will make us focus on different things, such as the background. I didn't want to show cute pink piglets – and believe me, they are very cute indeed. I didn't want to seduce the viewer in that way. It felt to me like black and white makes us focus on their soul rather than their appearance.

You have mentioned it took some time for this film to come to fruition, how did you connect with your producers and with funding for the project?

It really seems almost like a miracle that I was finally able to do GUNDA. I tried to make

this film at least ten times over 25 years, and it was never possible. Nobody got this, nobody understood how it would be possible or who would watch it. I had experience working with Anita Rehoff previously, and she simply trusted me that I was going to produce something worth seeing. I don't want to sound

mawkish, but it really was a blessing that she took this huge risk for me and the film. I cannot thank her enough for that. Then in the middle of the production Joslyn Barnes and Louverture films came onboard and they helped us to finish the film and take it to the next level in terms of distribution possibilities. In fact, it is the second time that Joslyn and Louverture films have helped me crucially - it is quite fair to say that AQUARELA wouldn't have been possible without her help.

What would you like audiences to take away? Is this film a “call to action”?

Yes, GUNDA to me has a very simple message: We can do better . I want to help people to take the first step to eliminate the act of killing from their lives. In 1900, Leo Tolstoy wrote in his essay “The First Step: An Essay on the Morals of Diet” that we will not fundamentally change our lives unless we stop killing. The fact that human beings kill each other is not so much a consequence of different ideologies but something far more atavistic. We don't merely have to accept that we shouldn't kill one another. We must realize that it is the act of killing itself, regardless of who we kill, that is terrible. Once we understand this, war will disappear. Tolstoy wrote this 120 years ago, and now would be a good time to take that to heart.

