

FLOWERS OF UKRAINE

A film by Adelina Borets

Poland, Ukraine, 2024, 70 mins, documentary

PRESS NOTES

International premiere

DOK Leipzig 2024

Competition Documentary Film



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CONTACTS

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FESTIVAL APPEARANCES

KRAKOW FILM FESTIVAL (2024) – World premiere

DOK LEIPZIG (2024) – International premiere

SAÕ PAULO IFF (2024) – South America premiere

KYIV IFF MOLODIST (2024) – Ukrainian premiere

VERZIÓ IFF (2024) – Hungarian premiere

KINOATHENS (2024) – Greek premiere

CINECITY Brighton FF (2024) – UK premiere

SYNOPSIS

SHORT

Natalia (67), a strong, independent anarchist with a sharp sense of humour, is determined to defend her beloved land against all odds. What begins as a battle against developers soon takes on a deeper meaning when Russia invades Ukraine, intensifying her fight for survival. *FLOWERS OF UKRAINE* paints a compelling portrait of a woman who refuses to back down, offering viewers a powerful message of resilience and hope.

LONG

Mrs. Natalia, 67, lives on a plot of land in Kyiv where she was born, raised her children, and hopes to spend the rest of her life. Surrounded by a rapidly expanding housing development of multi-story blocks, she fiercely resists the developers who threaten her home. Like the last of her kind, Natalia refuses to let corporations encroach on her land, opposing even the construction of an underground parking garage. Undaunted by the constant presence of bulldozers trying to intimidate her, she boldly confronts them head-on.

Her plot may appear dishevelled, with makeshift infrastructure resembling a temporary shelter, yet for Natalia, it is paradise. She raises chickens, goats, and grows beautiful flowers, turning her land into a peaceful oasis—a symbol of independence and, most importantly, freedom. To those who live in her “queendom,” it is more than just land; it’s a sanctuary.

Although her children, scattered around the world, urge her to sell the land and move into a comfortable apartment in Kyiv, she remains steadfast in her refusal. When war breaks out, Natalia stands her ground, defending not only her home but also her city. As Kyiv stabilises, she becomes actively involved in the citizen movement to help rebuild the city. Her story serves as a powerful metaphor for the resilience and strength of the Ukrainian nation. Natalia doesn’t wait passively for liberation; she takes action, even crafting Molotov cocktails in her personal fight for survival. Despite the overwhelming odds, she remains full of optimism, often laughing and cracking jokes – facing every challenge with humour on her path to victory.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was born and raised in Mariupol. In 2014, when I was 16, missiles began to strike my city. To protect me from the war, my parents sent me to Kyiv. During my journey, I met Natalia, the protagonist of this film, and her story deeply moved me. Natalia, now 67, lives on a small plot of land, surrounded by towering apartment blocks, and refuses to leave her home for anything. Her determination reminded me of my own family's history—how we had no choice but to leave our homes, first in Chernobyl, then in Mariupol. Unlike us, Natalia chooses to stay. Her life isn't easy, but she is content because she remains in her world, surrounded by nature, free in her own space. She is the queen of her land, a place where nature flourishes and freedom reigns.

FLOWERS OF UKRAINE is a character-driven observational documentary, divided into three parts. The first explores Natalia's life in Kyiv before the war, focusing on her battle against developers. The second captures how the war transforms her personal fight into a national struggle. The third follows Natalia as she adapts to the new reality, even though it is no longer the world she knew.

My close relationship with Natalia profoundly shaped my artistic vision for the film. This is not a traditional hero's journey; Natalia is more of an anti-hero, defying convention to defend what is hers. I don't judge her—my camera simply observes, capturing her incredible adventures. Being so deeply embedded in her "tribe" allowed me to witness intimate moments that couldn't have been scripted: the death of one of Natalia's husbands (she has two), bulldozers invading her land, or a chilling conversation with her husband about how he once planned to kill her. Despite everything, Natalia remains unbroken. She laughs in the face of death, standing as the queen of her land—not only for herself but also for those she shelters, including refugees from Luhansk, her ex-husband, her current husband, and her granddaughter Eva, who came to live with her after the war began. The relationship between Natalia and Eva is also central to the film. Natalia's strength and spirit touched every member of our crew. We spent extensive time with her before and after the invasion, gaining full access to her private life. What became clear to all of us is that this remarkable woman will never leave her land. She is a living symbol of Ukraine—proud, resilient, and relentlessly optimistic.

The visual concept of the film is unique in that Natalia's garden becomes one of its central characters. In the summer of 2021, the garden is vibrant and full of colour. We see Natalia tending it with care and devotion. But as the war arrives, so does the snow, covering the once-bright garden in a grey, wintry shroud. Natalia claims it always snows when the Russian army advances. Flowers and the language of flowers (floriography) play a crucial role in conveying her emotional state throughout the film. We witness flowers in various stages of growth, symbolising Natalia's own journey. Like a flower, she may seem delicate on the outside, but her roots are deeply anchored in the soil, strong and unyielding. In the final scene, a tiny sprout pushes through the earth, its roots disproportionately large, spreading far and wide to nurture new life.

The title, "Flowers of Ukraine," speaks not only to Natalia's garden but also to the spirit of the Ukrainian people – beautiful, strong, and unbreakable.

Adelina Borets, September 2024

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Adelina Borets

Born in 1998 in Mariupol, Ukraine, Adelina Borets graduated from the Warsaw Film School in directing and the Wajda School in screenwriting. At the moment, she is finishing her master's degree in arts at the Kieslowski Film School in Katowice, Poland. Her films have been presented at numerous international film festivals, including the Warsaw Film Festival, the New Orleans Film Festival, the Kyiv Critics' Week and the Polish Film Festival in Gdynia. She has already received several awards such as both the Grand Prize and the Audience Award at the 15th International Ecology Festival EKOFILM in the Czech Republic for her first short documentary THE WORMWOOD STAR. FLOWERS OF UKRAINE is Adelina's first feature-length documentary, which celebrated its world premiere at the Krakow Film Festival.



Filmography:

FLOWERS OF UKRAINE (2024) - Feature documentary

BEWARE OF A GOOD DOG (2024) - Short

EDEN HOUSE (2021) - Short

THE WORMWOOD STAR (2018) - Short

ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

Glib Lukianets (Gogol Film)

Glib Lukianets is a Ukrainian-Polish film producer and the founder of the Gogol Foundation, an emerging platform supporting East European film projects with production companies in Poland and Ukraine. As a graduate of the National Film School in Łódź and the EURODOC program, Glib is currently debuting with four feature films, including three documentaries and one fiction work.

Gogol Film, based in Łódź, specializes in artistic storytelling in both documentary and fiction genres. Its productions have been recognized at prestigious festivals such as IDFA, DOK Leipzig, Amman IFF, Sunny Side of the Doc, and the East Doc Platform. In 2022, the company was honored for its contributions to UNESCO's mission.

Natalia Grzegorzek (KOSKINO)

Natalia Grzegorzek is a film producer, head of Koskino - a production company based in Warsaw, Poland. She is also the president of the Polish Guild of Producers and a member of EAVE and ACE Producers network. Within her company she produced fiction films such as "My Wonderful Life" by Łukasz Grzegorzek (Best Director at Polish Film Festival), "Winter Flies" by Olmo Omerzu (Best Director at Karlovy Vary, Czech entry for Oscars), as well as the TV-series "Control" by Natasza Parzymies (globally on Max). In addition to fiction, Natalia also produces documentaries, such as "Tell Me More" by Martyna Peszko (premiered at the Hot Docs Film Festival) and "Only Day And Night" by Grzegorz Brzozowski (awarded at Krakow Film Festival).



CREDITS

Director & Script	Adelina Borets
Producers	Glib Lukianets, Natalia Grzegorzek
Cinematography	Bohdan Rozumnyi, Bohdan Borysenko
Editing	Agata Cierniak, Mateusz Wojtynski
Sound Design	Oleg Kulchytskyi, Volodymyr Dubas
Sound	Denys Kashchei
Music	Dakhabrakha
Production	Gogol Film
Co-Production	Koskino, Gogol Vertigo, DI Factory
Co-financed by	Polish Film Institute
Supported by	EURIMAGES, Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, Deutsche Filmakademie, FRF Filmproducenternas Rättighetsförening, STROOM, Gogol Foundation, Institute of Documentary Film, B2B Documentary Network, NOISE Film & TV, IDFA Bertha Fund
Festival distribution	East Silver Caravan

