

LOVE IS NOT AN ORANGE

A Film by Otilia Babara

PRESS NOTES



World premiere:

DOX Leipzig
Selection
2022

18th of October at 21:00 pm / Passages Kino Wintergarten

Screenings & tickets [here](#)

LOGLINE

Caught in a long distance relationship, mothers and daughters exchange gifts to express their love and videotapes to share their realities.

SYNOPSIS

In the early 90's, women left Moldova in large numbers to provide for their families. Unable to return home, they found a peculiar way to stay in touch: sending large cardboard boxes filled with gifts and food you could only dream about in those days. In return, their children would send videotapes. This exchange became a ritual among thousands of families. Video cameras and presents allowed these mothers and children to share glimpses of their realities while being apart.

Through these intimate private archives, the film depicts the fragility of family bonds through the eyes of a generation of mothers and daughters who were forced to live apart in order to survive. While doing so, she portrays a post-soviet country caught in a crossroads of history. A country whose women were unwittingly put in charge of making the transition from communism to capitalism.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

As a child growing up in post-soviet Moldova, I was bewildered by the fact that a lot of my friends were growing up without their mothers, who had left to work abroad. At the same time, I was fascinated by the boxes full of gifts these women would send to their kids on a regular basis. Oranges, chocolates, jeans, plastic dolls - countless goods that we had never seen or tasted before. This was a great source of excitement and it brought hope that we would be able to live well one day.

During my research, I discovered that while these boxes were arriving from abroad, the children and their fathers would record videotapes to send to the mothers. I started gathering a lot of these tapes from different families and I was immediately struck by the way people used this medium to communicate. I began to understand the dynamic of the mother-daughter relationship and the complexity of it. I became aware that behind the apparent joy of unpacking presents there was a constant angst and the hope that the mother would soon return.

These archives - in their ability to bring the collective experience of migration into the film - grew to become the story itself. What started as a fascination for the way people communicate turned into an interest about the visible contrasts between what is happening in our lives and what we decide to share with others.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moldova opened itself to the world in great part because of these mothers. They showed us another reality, another way of living, one box at a time. Even though I was not deprived of my mother's presence growing up, I am part of this generation and, since a few years, a migrant myself. I was always a close witness and confidant of the families that were directly affected, which compelled me to make this film.

These mothers found a way to express their love through objects. But behind these gifts also hides the inability to put emotions into words, when life confronts you with the indescribable pain of separation. This film is also an attempt to articulate feelings that for many years went unspoken, but that can finally see the light of day through the eyes of those who had no choice but to live apart.



ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Otilia Babara is a documentary filmmaker from Moldova currently based in Brussels. She holds a degree in documentary filmmaking from the Doctomads European Master program (Belgium, Hungary, Portugal) and is a 2013 Berlinale Talents fellow.

She directed and produced the short films Irene (2015), selected for several international film festivals, and Women on Canvas (2009), awarded in Astra Film Festival and Cronograf Film Festival.



She is drawn to those who usually go unnoticed. Her films expose big wounds hidden in small details and she's fascinated by untold stories of women.

Filmography

- 2015 Irene / short
- 2014 Blossom / short
- 2009 Women on Canvas / short



CREDITS

LOVE IS NOT AN ORANGE

Belgium, Moldova, Netherlands, France 2022 | 73 min.

Editing	Pierpaolo Filomeno
Produced by	Hanne Phlypo
Co-produced by	Simone van den Broek Christine Camdessus Otilia Babara
Sound design & re-recording mix Sound editor & Foley artist Foley recording	Mark Glynne Olmo van Straalen Mark Glynne
Additional editing	Miguel Cipriano Tom Denoyette Fatima Bianchi Otilia Babara
Clin d'oeil films team	Jet Koomen Evelien De Graef Mieke Struyve Thomas Van Gils
Basalt Film team	Eline Van Wees Anouk Houtman
Alegria Productions team	Lucile Trancart
Archive research	Ion Bors - Kantora Film Production Lucia Lupu
Archives Moldova's Independence (1991)	Vlad Druck

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