



# kurdish lover

un long métrage documentaire de  
a feature documentary by Clarisse Hahn

*Best Film of the  
International Competition*  
Festival Forumdoc  
Brésil

*Prix du film Français  
Prix du public*  
Festival Entrevues  
Belfort

*Grand Prix*  
Festival Traces de vie  
Clermond-Ferrand

*Special Jury Mention*  
Femina Film Festival  
Brésil

lesfilmsduprésent



24



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# kurdish lover

2012 | 98 minutes | high definition 4/3 | stereo | kurdish with english subtitles

**festivals selections :**

MONTREAL Festival des films du Monde, world première, 2010  
CLERMONT-FERRAND Traces de Vies, France  
MONTREUIL Rencontres du Cinéma Documentaire, France  
LJUBLJANA Independent Documentary Film Festival, Slovénie  
BELO HORIZONTE Forumdoc, Brésil  
BELFORT Entrevues Festival International du film, France  
OUIDAH Quintessence, Festival International du Film, Bénin  
BERGAME Film Meeting, Italie  
FLORENCE Film Middle East Now, Italie  
PARIS Cinéma du Réel, France  
LONDON International Documentary Festival, Royaume-Uni  
LASALLE Festival de films documentaires, France  
LONDON Open City Documentary Film Festival, Royaume Uni  
RIO DE JANEIRO Femina, International Women's Film Festival, Brésil  
BELGRADE International Festival of Ethnological Film, Serbie  
PERM Flahertiana International Documentary Film Festival, Russie  
ROVERTO International Festival of Archaeological Film, Italie  
BOGOTA Muestra Internacional Documental, Colombie  
PARIS, Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporain, France

press kit and photos on [www.lesfilmdupresent.fr](http://www.lesfilmdupresent.fr)



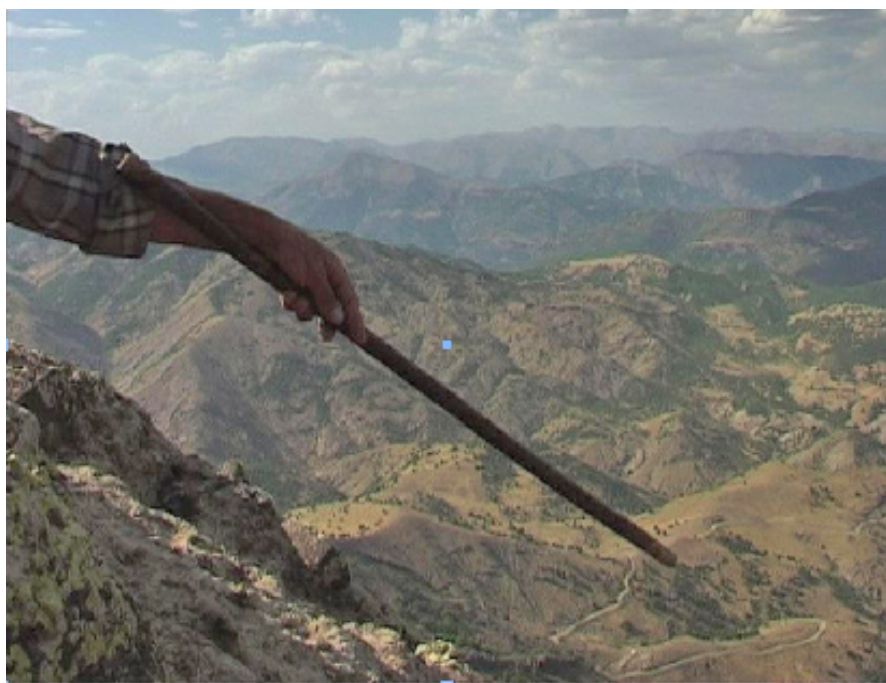
## Synopsis

“ The Kurdish lover is Oktay, a man of Kurdish origin with whom I share my life. We have been drifting through a devastated region brought to a standstill by war and economic misery. How do people manage to co-exist in this place? This is the question posed by the film. Here we live in close proximity to one another, in a tightly woven network of geographical and social ties. Loving someone can become confused with having a hold over them. It is with an often black humour that the characters featured in this film find ways, within their community, to affirm that they truly exist.

A shaman goes into trance in front of the television, sex-starved hermit dreams of marriage, a ewe is sacrificed and eaten, an old woman prevents her daughter-in-law from learning to read, a shepherdess lives at the top of the mountain and would like to return to the valley, the military watch over the village, a man who came from Europe goes off to request the hand in marriage of a young girl living with her mother.

It is through these situations that we discover the reality of families doing what they can to find a way of living together, to take the best – or the worst – from each moment. “





## Background

Since Ancient times, the Kurds have lived in a mountainous land divided between Turkey, Syria and Iraq- Kurdistan. They are the largest ethnic group in the world to not have a state of their own. For decades the mountains of Kurdistan have seen armed conflicts between states and Kurdish guerrillas.

The people that I filmed live in Turkish Kurdistan\*. They belong to a group of villagers who have been targeted for violent reprisals for having helped the guerrillas. Military forces destroyed their village and they were relocated to the foot of the mountains. The village that I filmed, Suleimanye, is still frequently visited by military forces. By filming alone, with discreet, portable equipment, I was able to produce this film without drawing attention to myself.

Due to economic hardship, numerous campaigns of forced assimilation and massive deportation, over a million Kurds have emigrated from their homeland, dispersed to the four corners of the world. The parents of Oktay, my partner, arrived in France in the 1970s. They are part of that diaspora who, subjected to a long history of persecution, have become viscerally attached to their homeland. Like hundreds of thousands of other Kurdish immigrants, they return to their village each year for the summer holidays. Many young people born in France, Germany or England come to the village in the hope of meeting the person they will marry.

Kurdistan is a mosaic of regions that cultivate the thousands of small cultural and religious differences that separate the Kurds from others and that sometimes lead to outright antagonism. I spent time here with Kurds from the Alévi faith, one of the most ancient Kurdish religions. The Alévi Kurds subscribe to an animism with influences from Islam. For them, the summit of the mountains is sacred. Every stone, every waterway has a meaning and a history.

\* Turkish Kurdistan, historically the heart of Kurdistan, covers a quarter of the territory of Kurdistan. With a surface area comparable to that of France, 15 million Kurdish Turks represent 25% of the total population of Turkey.



## **The origine of the project**

On a hot summer's day in Paris, Kurds were demonstrating in the street. Almost exclusively men, torsos bare, shouting political slogans. Dancing in circles, holding hands, sweating under the sun; it was repetitive, almost trancelike.

I was at my window filming some images of these men and their bodies pressed against each other by the dance. These stolen images gave me the desire to know more about the Kurds, to get closer to them, approach them. This is how I met Oktay.

The title of the film "Kurdish Lover" could be the title of a pop song, or a cheerful traditional ballad. "The Kurdish Lover"...is Oktay. The film talks less about our particular story than about the community to which he belongs, and which I discovered, through him. It is a ballad for Kurdistan and a journey, dedicated to our daughter Méandre, born the 21st of July 2009.





## For reflection

What identity do we construct for ourselves when our existence itself is denied?

How can we save our culture when we leave our homeland?

What values do we transmit to our children when we have been uprooted?

Everyday life in Oktay's village is like a distillation of the range of problems within the Kurdish community; isolated, they are trapped between war, illiteracy and poverty.

By spending time with them I slowly got the feeling that each member of the community was living in symbiosis with the others, as if they were all limbs attached to the same body. The events in one's personal life are immediately shared with others. Everything contributes to maintaining these relationships of interdependence: the small houses where privacy is impossible, the money that the children must share with their parents, the arranged marriages between cousins, the animals that require a constant presence, the houses where several generations live under the same roof, sexual taboos, the way the virginity of young girls is carefully guarded by all those around her.



## Clarisse Hahn, writer & director

French filmmaker born in 1973, she pursues documentary enquiry through her films, photographs and video installations.

Her documentaries are combined with her sustained involvement in the lives of the people she films. She follows her subjects for a minimum of one year; observing, filming, and becoming part of their daily life. She delves into the complex network of personal and communal values which bind people together. Hahn's documentaries come from her desire for intimate communication with her subjects. Her interests lie specifically in showing how individuals deal and react with their environment.

### **les protestants**

creative documentary

2006 | 85 minutes | color

festivals : Nyon "Visions du réel", Doclisboa, Bilbao "Zinebi"

### **karima**

creative documentary

2003 | 98 minutes | color

festivals : Nyon "Visions du réel", FID Marseille, Doclisboa

### **hôpital**

creative documentary

1999 | 37 minutes | color

festivals : Paris "Tout court", Nyon "Visions du réel"

### **boyzone**

creative documentary

2011 | 90 minutes | color

in development





## Artistic & technical sheet

**writing & direction** Clarisse HAHN

**direction's assistant** Oktay SENGUL

**photography & sound** Clarisse HAHN

**editing** Catherine RASCON

**sound editing & mixing** Janne LAINE

**color grading** Samuel DRAVET

**length** 98 minutes

**year of production** 2012

**language** français, anglais, allemand, kurde

**shooting format** haute définition 4/3

**country of production** France

**producer** Patrice NEZAN - lesfilmsduprésent

**co-producers** Farid REZKALLAH - 24 images, Sonja LINDEN - Avanton Productions

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## lesfilmsduprésent

Since 2004, the production company lesfilmsduprésent (carrying on the activity of Heure d'été Productions – 1994 to 2003) has produced mainly creative documentaries which endeavour to question the world that surrounds us in all its complexity. We started with films about dance and music, and since then, in our films on social issues, we carry with us the awareness that there are stories to be told using rhythm, or using bodies in movement – seeking what there is that lies beyond words and beyond speech.

Our catalogue of films reflects this guiding thread; we have produced the films by authors such as Clarisse Hahn, Alain Patel, Claudio Pazienza, Catherine Maximoff, Stéphane Vuillet or Antoine Boutet... We support film makers who bring a radical viewpoint to our contemporary world by developing a strong aesthetic sensibility. Their generosity in sharing their sense of curiosity seems to us to be the key to bringing audiences in closer contact with more demanding subjects.

Today, having bridged the gap between documentary and fiction, we also welcome filmmakers who nourish their stories with all the richness of the real.

### Selective filmography :

**wayne mcgregor - going somewhere** creative documentary by Catherine Maximoff | 80 & 52 minutes | 2011 | MJW productions, Arte  
Random Dance

**zanzibar musical club** creative documentary by Philippe Gasnier & Patrice Nezan | 85 & 52 minutes | 2010 | Arte/Zdf  
30 festival selection (Dubai, Florence, Vancouver...)

**scenes from a wild boar hunt** creative documentary Claudio Pazienza | 46 minutes | 2007 | Arte  
36 festival selections (Nyon, Montréal, Taiwan...) + 6 prizes ( SCAM, Bruxelles, Clermont-Ferrand...)

**les ballets de-ci, de-là** creative documentary by Alain Platel | 110 & 58 minutes | 2009 | Arte  
36 festival selections (Cannes, Montréal, Leipzig...) + 2 prizes (IMZ, Szolnok Hongrie)

**aperghis, storm beneath a skull** creative documentary by Catherine Maximoff | 59 minutes | 2009 | Arte  
21 festival selections (Montréal, Banff,...) + 2 prizes ( SCAM, Szolnok Hongrie)



## **contact**

lesfilmsdu**présent**

Nicole Craime

19 rue de la République

13200 Arles

France

phone 00 33 4 90 49 69 66

contact@lesfilmsdupresent.fr



lesfilmsdu**présent**

