



**TIGER  
COMPETITION**

INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL  
ROTTERDAM  
2021

# LANDSCAPES OF RESISTANCE

A FILM BY  
MARTA POPIVODA

WITH SOFIJA SONJA VUJANOVIĆ AND IVO VUJANOVIĆ · DIRECTOR AND WRITER MARTA POPIVODA · WRITER AND DRAMATURGE ANA VUJANOVIĆ · PRODUCERS MARTA POPIVODA, DRAGANA JOVOVIĆ, JASMINA SIJERČIĆ · DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY IVAN MARKOVIĆ · EDITOR JELENA MAKSIMOVIĆ · SOUND DESIGNER JAKOV MUNIŽABA · RE-RECORDING MIXER SIMON APOSTOLOU · DRAWINGS PRVOSLAV PIVO KARAMATIJEVIĆ · COLORIST YIANNIS ZAHAROYIANNIS · DV FOOTAGE MAJA MEDIĆ · EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ZSOFI LILI KOVACS · SOUND EFFECTS EDITOR NIKOLA MEDIĆ · GRAPHIC DESIGNER ANJA PÖLK



medienboard  
BerlinBrandenburg



arte



bocalupo  
films

# LANDSCAPES OF RESISTANCE

A film by Marta Popivoda

## Press notes



### International Film Festival Rotterdam 2021

Tiger Competition

**\*\*world premiere\*\***

Press contact:

**NOISE Film PR**

Mirjam Wiekenkamp

[mirjam@noisefilmpr.com](mailto:mirjam@noisefilmpr.com)

+49 176 28771839

### CONTENT

- > [Short synopsis](#)
- > [Long synopsis](#)
- > [Director's statement](#)
- > [About Sonia](#)
- > [About the filmmakers](#)
- > [Production companies](#)
- > [Credits](#)
- > [Contacts](#)

*How can a landscape speak?  
It's like wondering whether the grass, the crickets,  
or the pond are only a backdrop to the events,  
or whether they actually participate in them,  
with their shadows, depths, sounds,  
waiting to become narrators?*

- Ana Vujanović, co-author of *Landscapes of Resistance*



Stills from *Landscapes of Resistance*

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

---

97-year-old antifascist fighter Sonja was one of the first female partisans in Yugoslavia and a member of the resistance in Auschwitz. By listening to Sonja's stories, we travel through the landscapes of her revolutionary past, as her memories start to intertwine with the filmmakers' own confrontation with the rising fascism in Europe today.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

---

Sonja (97) was one of the first women who joined the partisan resistance movement in Yugoslavia. Inspired by the revolutionary books she received from a classmate in high school, she joined the communist and antifascist organization in the late 1930s and in 1941 became a partisan fighter in German-occupied Serbia. Ultimately, she was captured, tortured and after several other prisons and concentration camps taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau. There she became a member of the resistance and a leader of its combat unit.

By listening to Sonja's story, we travel through the landscapes of her revolutionary life as they exist today - the Serbian forests and mountains where the partisans gathered and the muddy grounds and countless chimneys of Auschwitz - towards her tiny Belgrade flat where she lives with her husband and cat.

For over 10 years, director Marta Popivoda and Sonja's granddaughter and co-author of the film Ana Vujanović recorded their conversations with Sonja. What starts off as a celebration of the resistance of one woman and her comrades gradually turns into a cinematic antifascist manifesto as the filmmakers become more and more confronted with the rise of fascism in Europe today.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

---

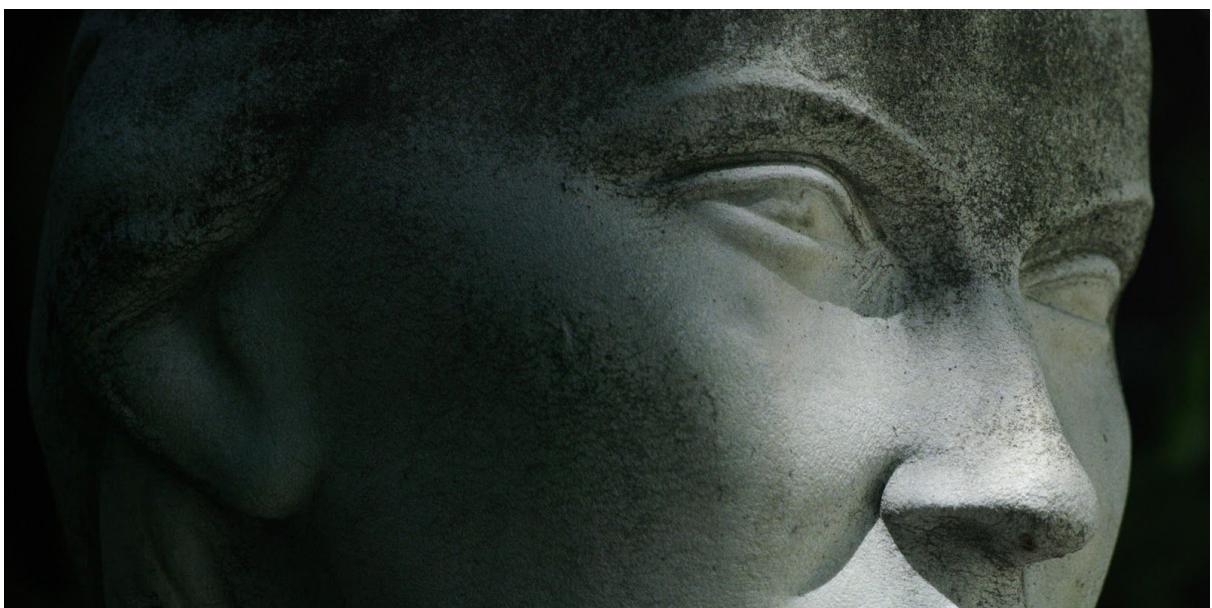
I am a feminist, queer, and antifascist artist and cultural worker. One of the main concerns in my work is the relation between memory and history. Today, for me, it means questioning the rising tide of fascism and radicalization of class society.

Antifascist resistance is the film's central theme, and it's told from two perspectives. The main perspective is that of Sonja's life story, which starts amidst the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930s. Sonja is an extremely suggestive storyteller, capable of talking about past events without hindsight. She took us directly into the atmosphere and mindset of the time that gave birth to antifascist resistance.

The other is the contemporary perspective of the two of us, the scriptwriters – Marta Popivoda and Ana Vujanović – a queer couple and leftist activists from Belgrade, who emigrated to Berlin. We visited and interviewed Sonja for over ten years, confronting her story with our own experiences of rising fascism in Europe today.

Ana says in the film, *"many Yugoslav heroes from WWII got public monuments. Some of them are women. But none of them is an Auschwitz survivor."* This film is made as an alternative monument to Sonja and many other unknown heroes of the antifascist fight. Importantly, though, she is not a monolithic, genderless heroine for us, as we know them from official history. Our cinematic monument is affective and contemplative, bearing 'a womanly face of war'.

Marta Popivoda, January 2021



Still from *Landscapes of Resistance*  
Monument for Vera Blagojević. Beograd. Sculptor: Vida Jocić (1958)

## ABOUT SONJA

by Ana Vujanović

---

Sofija Sonja Vujanović was born in the village Petka, near Valjevo in Yugoslavia. She was born in 1920 into the wealthy peasant family Stojanović. Her father was politically engaged as a social-democrat, a deputy, and also as a fighter in WWI against the German occupiers. After primary school, she enrolled in the First Belgrade Gymnasium, and in the later grades transferred to the Valjevo gymnasium. There, she became active in a literary society, characterized by a sharp division between communist youth and nationalists, called “Ljotičevci”. Sonja belonged to the communist circle, where her sense of social injustice sharpened. Because of that political engagement, she got expelled from high school. At the same time, she started dating the president of the literary society, Sava (Saša) Stanišić, who was also a secretary of the district committee of SKOJ (Yugoslav Communist Youth). After being expelled from the school she was afraid of going home and in trying to avoid being grounded, she left for Belgrade with Sava, where they secretly married. They started living together and became communist activists, spreading books and leaflets, taking part in performances and other events dedicated to women’s rights and exploitation of workers, and working on politically activating youth, women, workers, and peasants.



Sonja's portrait as a partisan

When the Axis powers occupied Yugoslavia in April 1941, Sonja and Sava helped to organize what is considered to be the first detachment of the partisan anti-fascist movement in Serbia – the Valjevo Detachment, and on June 28 they became fighters with the Kolubara unit. Sonja was the first woman who joined the unit. In the following months, they took part in numerous guerrilla actions and fights against the Nazis, until Sava fell. Although left without her big support and love, Sonja continued fighting and soon became a leader of a partisan unit. However, during winter, the partisan movement entered a crisis and many fighters got captured.

Sonja was captured in February 1942 and from that moment her arduous journey through Nazi prisons and camps began: the Šabac camp, Gestapo prison in Belgrade, concentration camp Banjica in Belgrade, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Ravensbrück. In her dossier issued by the Gestapo, it was stated “*Sie ist eine große Kommunistin*” (“*She is a big communist*”) as the reason for imprisonment. She would later proudly show that paper whenever there was an occasion.



Sonja with her partisan unit

In the camps, Sonja continued being active in self-organizations of inmates and even in the resistance movement in Auschwitz, where she became a leader of a combat unit. She survived all of the prisons, thanks to luck, family connections, misunderstandings, her good health, as well as the engagement in the organizations that provided care and moral support to the gathered women. She eventually, together with four other girls, escaped from a column of civilians and the German army on April 27, 1945. With one of them, Vida Jocić, who was already her friend at the partisans and later Auschwitz, she stayed a life-long friend.

After months of wandering through Europe and undergoing rehabilitation programs, she arrived in Yugoslavia, where she, as a communist, had to face the questions: Did she collaborate with Nazis? Was she a capo in the camp? Despite that, she continued her social-political engagement. After graduating from the Literature department of Belgrade university, she worked as a journalist and then as a librarian in a university library. At the same time, her whole life she was active in preserving the memory of the fascist and Nazi crimes, as a member of SUBNOR (Associations of the People's Liberation Struggle) and its Section of the survivors, in public speeches, interviews, open letters against rising nationalism in Yugoslavia in the late 1980s, as well as in working on Yugoslav pavilion in the Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau.



In middle age, Sonja married communist Ivo Vujanović – a partisan fighter and communist dissident, with whom she lived until the end of their lives, in their late 90s, surrounded with numerous friends, family members, comrades, neighbors, and caregivers, who kept them alive, politically sharp and even enthusiastic about achieving a more just and egalitarian society.



Sonja and Ana Vujanović in 2007 - Picture by Maja Medic



Sonja in *Landscapes of Resistance*



## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

---

### **Marta Popivoda**

*Director, producer, co-author*

Marta Popivoda (Berlin/Belgrade) is a filmmaker, video-artist, and cultural worker. Her work explores tensions between memory and history, collective and individual bodies, as well as ideology and everyday life, with a focus on antifascist and feminist potentialities of the Yugoslav socialist project. She cherishes collective practice in art-making and research, and for several years has been part of the TkH (Walking Theory) collective. Popivoda's first feature documentary, *Yugoslavia, How Ideology Moved Our Collective Body*, premiered at the 63rd Berlinale and was later screened at many international film festivals. The film is part of the permanent collection of MoMA New York, and is featured in *What Is Contemporary Art?*, MoMA's online course about contemporary art from 1980 to the present. Her work has also been featured in major art galleries, such as Tate Modern London, MoMA New York, M HKA Antwerp, Museum of Modern Art + MSUM Ljubljana, etc. Popivoda received the prestigious Berlin Art Prize for the visual arts by Akademie der Künste Berlin and Edith-Russ-Haus Award for Emerging Media Artist. Her latest feature documentary *Landscapes of Resistance* premieres in the Tiger Competition of IFFR 2021.

### **Ana Vujanović**

*Co-author*

Ana Vujanović (Berlin / Belgrade) is a cultural worker in the fields of contemporary performing arts and culture: researcher, dramaturge, writer, lecturer. She holds a Ph.D. in Humanities (Theatre Studies). She was a member of the editorial collective of TkH [Walking Theory], a Belgrade-based collective, and editor-in-chief of the *TkH Journal for Performing Arts Theory*, 2000-17. For several years a particular commitment of hers was to empower independent scenes in Belgrade and former Yugoslavia. She has lectured at various universities and educational programs throughout Europe. Since 2016 she has been a team member and mentor of fourth year students at SNDO – School for New Dance Development in Amsterdam. She participates in art projects in the fields of performance, theatre, dance, and video/film as a dramaturge. She has published a number of articles in journals and collections and authored and edited several books, most recently *A Live Gathering: Performance and Politics in Contemporary Europe*, with L. Piazza (Berlin: b\_books, 2019). She recently finished the documentary film *Landscapes of Resistance* together with Marta Popivoda, and is currently working on a long-term research project *Toward a Transindividual Self*, with B. Cvejić.

## PRODUCTION COMPANIES

---

### **Bocalupo Films**

*France*

Bocalupo Films is a production company based in Paris. Founded in 2008 by directors Armel Hostiou and Mauro Herce they were joined by producer Jasmina Sijerčić in 2016. They share a communal passion for films that explore original narratives and they defend a strong collaboration between authors and producers. Since the creation of the company they have produced titles such as *Rives* by Armel Hostiou (ACID Cannes 2012), *Stubborn* by Armel Hostiou (RDV with French Cinema Lincoln Center 2015), *Dead Slow Ahead* by Mauro Herce (Locarno IFF 2016 – Jury Award Cineasti del presente), *Invisible Pyramide* by Armel Hostiou (Cinéma du Réel 2019), *Merry Christmas, Yiwu* by Mladen Kovacevic (IFFR 2020), *The Last Bath* by Davide Bonneville (Tokyo IFF 2020) and *Landscapes of Resistance* by Marta Popivoda (IFFR Tiger Competition 2021).

### **Theory at Work**

*Serbia / Germany*

Theory at Work is a film production company and collective based in Belgrade, Serbia. It's founded by film director Marta Popivoda and dramaturge Ana Vujanović, together with producer Dragana Jovović. Theory at Work is devoted to contemporary practices in a creative documentary, experimental film, and video art. Their idea is to create an artistic platform for producing radical experiments in cinema, especially by female and leftist authors. *Landscapes of Resistance* (2021) is the first feature-length documentary of Theory at Work, whose team already successfully collaborated on *Yugoslavia, How Ideology Moved Our Collective Body* by Marta Popivoda, which premiered at the 63rd Berlinale.



Still from *Landscapes of Resistance*

Monument for Stjepan Filipović, Valjevo (SRB). Sculptor: Vojin Bakić (1960)

## CREDITS

---

### **Landscapes of Resistance**

Serbia, Germany, France | 2021 | 95' | Documentary

Original title:	Pejzaži otpora
Format:	DCP
Language:	Serbo-Croatian
Director and writer:	Marta Popivoda
Writer and dramaturge:	Ana Vujanović
Director of photography:	Ivan Marković
Editor:	Jelena Maksimović
Sound designer:	Jakov Munižaba
Producers:	Dragana Jovović and Marta Popivoda for Theory at Work Jasmina Sijerčić for Bocalupo Films
Executive producer:	Zsofi Lili Kovacs
With:	Sofija Sonja Vujanović, Ivo Vujanović

## CONTACTS

---

### **Press agent**

NOISE Film PR  
Mirjam Wiekenkamp  
[mirjam@noisefilmpr.com](mailto:mirjam@noisefilmpr.com)  
+49 176 28771839

### **Production**

Bocalupo Films  
Jasmina Sijerčić  
[jasmina@bocalupofilms.com](mailto:jasmina@bocalupofilms.com)  
+33 6 59 24 64 43



Still from *Landscapes of Resistance*