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A FILM BY **ALEXANDER SOKUROV**

FRANCOFONIA

AN ELEGY FOR EUROPE



2015 VENICE FILM FESTIVAL
Official Competition

IDEALE AUDIENCE, ZERO ONE FILM, N279 ENTERTAINMENT present

in co-production with ARTE FRANCE CINEMA and LE MUSEE DU LOUVRE

FRANCOFONIA

A FILM BY **ALEXANDER SOKUROV**

with **Louis-Do DE LENCQUESAING, Benjamin UTZERATH, Vincent NEMETH, Johanna KORTHALS ALTES**

WORLD SALES AND FESTIVALS

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2015 - France/Germany/Netherlands - 87 mins - in French, Russian and German



SYNOPSIS

FRANCOFONIA is the story of two remarkable men, Louvre director Jacques Jaujard and Nazi Occupation officer Count Franziskus Wolff-Metternich - enemies then collaborators - whose alliance would be the driving force behind the preservation of museum treasures. **FRANCOFONIA** explores the relationship between art and power, the Louvre museum as a living example of civilization, and what art tells us about ourselves even in the midst of one of the bloodiest conflicts the world has ever seen.

From the master director of FAUST (Venice Golden Lion), RUSSIAN ARK, MOLOCH and MOTHER AND SON.

*Throughout his vast filmography – documentary, fiction and others somewhere in between – Alexander Sokurov has demonstrated that a museum is much more than a place to preserve art. Museums are the veritable DNA of a civilization, the living organ of the city where the heart of a nation beats. Sokurov's approach to a museum is nothing less than sacred. With **FRANCOFONIA**, he explores a historical chapter that we might know, but whose description does not take into account all the lines that run through it. Against the backdrop of the Louvre Museum's history and artworks, Sokurov applies his unique personal vision onto staged re-enactments and archives for a fascinating portrait of real-life characters Jacques Jaujard and Count Franziskus Wolff-Metternich and their compulsory collaboration at the Louvre Museum under the Nazi Occupation.*



THE LOUVRE UNDER NAZI OCCUPATION

THE GOALS OF STATE AND ART SELDOM COINCIDE

In view of the threat of war triggered by Germany's invasion of the Sudetenland, the Louvre's art collections were packed up on September 27 and 28, 1938 on the orders of its director, Jacques Jaujard, and transported by lorry to the Château de Chambord in the Loire Valley, according to a plan that had been drawn up long before by France's National Museums Department. Days later, after the signing of the Munich agreement, the evacuation was halted and the works were returned to Paris that October.

In early September 1939, Jaujard repeated the procedure: the works of art belonging to the Louvre and other Paris museums were removed from Paris under the responsibility of the National Museums Department in order to protect them from possible bombing (and not principally due to the danger of a possible invasion or occupation). Although the Château de Chambord was the principal storage facility, other châteaux, especially those in the Loire Valley, were requisitioned with the consent of their owners to house the collections. The curators took on responsibility for managing the storage facilities.

Concurrently, protective measures were taken in the Louvre itself, directed by Jaujard: the sculptures were protected with sandbags, fire protection was installed, the windows were camouflaged, etc. Those paintings and sculptures that had not been evacuated were stored in the museum basement. The frames of the removed paintings were left in place.

In spring 1940 in Germany, the Curator of the Rhineland, Franziskus Wolff-Metternich, was appointed to take charge of protecting works of art. There were many good arguments in favor of setting up a Department for the Protection of Artworks, such as the experience of the First World War, during which priceless cultural artifacts were lost forever, and also the interest in the many German art treasures that had been in France since the Napoleonic wars.

On September 29, 1940, the Louvre was partially reopened. The opening ceremony was attended by Jaujard and Metternich (who made a speech), Field Marshal von Rundstedt, Hermann Bunjes, Ambassador Otto Abetz, and others. From October 1940, some sculpture galleries were open to the public for a few days a week. A sales desk for postcards was also opened. Hermann Bunjes wrote a German-language guide, and guided tours were organized for German officers and soldiers.

The protectors of works of art were faced with a dilemma. They had to cooperate with the Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce, which was authorized by a July 1940 order of the Führer to confiscate all cultural artefacts of obvious value that were the "ownerless goods of Jews". As there were no particular regulations apart from the Hague Convention and the Franco-German armistice pact, Wolff-Metternich tried to impose an interpretation of the orders compliant with international law. The German archives concerning the theft of artworks in France testify to the bizarre spectacle that took place during those months of war: Metternich, who stood his ground, attracted the hostility of the German Ambassador, and then of Alfred Rosenberg, and of Reichsmarschall Göring.

Tensions between Wolff-Metternich and the other Occupation organisations, as well as with his superiors in Berlin, intensified. In 1942, he was finally sent away from Paris, but continued to oversee the work of his staff from Bonn.

Jaujard spent the whole war in Paris, and in his old Renault car, in which he travelled from château to château to inspect the collections that had been evacuated. When the fighting moved closer to Paris, Jaujard organised a system of protection and defence in the Louvre involving all the available staff and curators. The first skirmishes erupted in Paris on August 19, 1944. The main danger for the Louvre was its proximity to the Hotel Meurice, the German HQ. Although fighting for the liberation of Paris raged all around the Louvre, it suffered no significant damage. On August 25, 1944, the armored column commanded by General Leclerc entered the city. The battle in the Tuileries ended at about 4pm with the surrender of the German forces.

From October 1944, the collections were progressively returned and the Louvre was partly reopened. A Commission for the return of the works was set up, headed by Jaujard, whose task it was to search out and recover the works of art stolen by the Germans. The Louvre fully reopened its doors in July 1945. Its collections emerged from the war practically unscathed, which was not the case of those previously owned by the Jewish victims of the Petain regime and the occupying forces.





COMMENTS FROM ALEXANDER SOKUROV

THE ARKS

What would Paris be without the Louvre, or Russia without the Hermitage, those indelible national landmarks? Let's imagine an ark on the ocean, with people and great works of art aboard – books, pictures, music, sculpture, more books, recordings, and more. The ark's timbers cannot resist and a crack has appeared. What will we save? The living? Or the mute, irreplaceable testimonies to the past? **FRANCOFONIA** is a requiem for what has perished, a hymn to human courage and spirit, and to what unites mankind.

A WORLD WITHIN A WORLD

The museum community is probably the most stable part of the cultural world. What would we be without museums? Museums show us that a grand and magnificent culture existed before -- considerably grander, smarter, than anything we are able to create today. The levels of the Louvre, the Hermitage, the Prado, the British Museum have always seemed to me located at staggering heights. I went to the Hermitage for the first time at age 27. This is very late, but I did not have other options. I am from a very simple family, very simple background.

THE HERMITAGE

When I heard we would be able to shoot **RUSSIAN ARK** in the Hermitage, I was intoxicated by the possibilities. I was literally intoxicated by the good treatment toward me and the crew by the Hermitage and [Mikhail] Piotrovsky. I was happy working there, and it seemed to me that under these conditions we could create a hymn to this world. The museum is a world within a world. By creating films in museums and about museums, we invite different people, people from different cultures, to actually meet these original works.

THE LOUVRE

I was immediately enthusiastic when the opportunity arose to film in the Louvre. I saw it as a return to my dream of making a cycle of art films with the Hermitage, the Louvre, the Prado, the British museum. It was wonderful that the Louvre administration responded so enthusiastically to our proposal. And then it was sheer joy to have the chance to work with my remarkable and illustrious colleague, cinematographer Bruno Delbonnel, a prominent master, a great artist. This combination of circumstances is a wonder in itself.



NAZI SOLDIERS IN THE LOUVRE

People seem to be fascinated by the sight of Nazi soldiers in the galleries of the Louvre. Those soldiers in a temple to art? A paradox? But why should that be a paradox? Soldiers are also human beings, except that they wear boots and helmets. In actual fact, though, the Louvre's galleries were bare during the Occupation. The works they contained had been removed and hidden several years before. People had been seized by a premonition of a second world war, involving the whole of Europe. In Leningrad, in Paris and in London, people began anxiously seeking shelter – holes in the ground, refuges, strong walls and spaces deep underground – to hide works of art. People began to understand: if we perish, our art will also inevitably perish – our hopes, our prayers, our God.

THE BOMBING OF PARIS

Paris, the city of museums, of a deep-seated humanistic culture, the cultural capital of the Old World. If Paris had been bombed in World War II, what would that have meant to us? Only as the end of all things, an irreparable event, a turning of the back on life. Strangely enough, it did not happen. Everything else was being bombed and burned while soldiers pillaged and army trucks bore off the spoils of war. Everywhere except in Paris. Paris was a haven of salvation. In old photos of the German Occupation in Paris, we see soldiers sitting in cafés and going to theatre. Young French women and men are seen in the streets, out cycling or strolling. It was as if peace, glorious peace, had broken out.

JACQUES JAUJARD & FRANZ GRAF WOLFF-METTERNICH

In studying contemporary documents, two unique figures immediately stand out from the rest: Louvre director Jacques Jaujard, and a representative of the Occupation forces, Franz Graf Wolff-Metternich. It would seem that they are enemies, but it gradually becomes clear that they are not enemies and that they have a lot in common. The period of their meeting, their confrontation, and their cooperation during the Second World War is the bulk of **FRANCOFONIA**. These two remarkable figures, who were almost the same age, each had the same vocation to protect and preserve works of art. Who were these men and who did they represent as humanist senior civil servants? Through which practical initiatives were they able to defend the artworks? Is it possible, in the circumstances of a merciless war, to defend the values of humanity? Even in the most difficult times of that war, these two not very influential men were able to halt aggression and preserve the Louvre's great art collection. How deeply we regret today that nothing similar happened in the Soviet Union, Poland, or the rest of Eastern Europe.



COL. DEL AROCHE
Battaglia di Arica, 1817



A PATH WE HAVE ALL TRAVELLED

FRANCOFONIA is not an historical film in the classic sense. I did not want to take a scientific approach, even if I attach great importance to factual details. What I was after was not a political aim, but an aim that one could characterize as artistic or more exactly as “fully conscious of” – to reflect through the lives of our characters a feeling for a period, its intonation, languages. People in their own particular circumstances, people who have fought to protect culture, to preserve art by overcoming the circumstances bearing down on them.

In my mind's eye, I saw this film as a path, a path we have all been on, a path that we are travelling again, and which the contemporary human travelling alongside us can understand and feel. A path that will enable us to shift between past, present, and future, in our own way, guided only by thoughts, reflections, and associations. **FRANCOFONIA** is more collage than chronological, often following the meanderings of changing thought-processes.

A SHIP IN A STORM

In **FRANCOFONIA**, the Author corresponds with his Friend aboard a ship carrying an important collection of museum art. The ship battling the storm, like fate in its purest form, is unavoidable: what will be will be. One may suppose that the ship might have been able to avoid the storm, but for some unknown reason it did not divert, or perhaps was unable to. All the containers are lost at sea. The confrontation, the dialogue, between the Friend at sea and the Author at home is a storyline of thought, a stream of consciousness.

ART AND HISTORY

If we touch art, we cannot not touch history. Art is linked to such a degree to history, the historical process, that unfortunately history takes on a destructive influence on art. It would be nice to detach art from history, but it's impossible...

These characters are a part of this history, and part of life. For me, Napoleon and Marianne are not formal figures, symbolic figures. For me they are living characters, completely alive. All ghosts are alive, if they exist. And I believe in the existence of ghosts, and all these creatures that inhabit houses.



FRANCOFONIA

I liked the sound of "francofonia", its tone. Like music imbues a film. As a title, Francofonia says something about what I was looking for, something that evokes a French intonation even if German and Russian have their place in the film, too.

DOCUMENTARY AND FICTION

Our task was how to bring together the part that we filmed with the film archives. How would we bring it all together in one artistic fabric? When working with the archival material, we had to strip that footage of their invented, artificial image. Everything that is related to Paris in the time of the Occupation is a fictional representation. 100%! People walking in the streets, sitting in cafés - absolutely narrative cinema. We did the same thing when we filmed the Louvre from the roof. That was more an art project than documentary. But behind any documentary image shot there is an artistic endeavor. This is inevitable. It is no coincidence that many documentary filmmakers want to make narrative cinema. All this has the same single space in reality. The materials we film or that we have, we can treat them artistically or adopt a formal and non-artistic attitude.

A STUDENT

It still seems to me that whatever I do is very flawed. So my relationship to cinema is that of a student. I'm simply a student in this process. I learn from whom I can learn. And these films are like my lessons. Thanks to my illustrious imaginary teachers, I try to do my lessons, pass tests and exams. What the results will be, I do not know.



ALEXANDER SOKUROV was born June 14, 1951 in Podorvikha, Russia (Irkutsk region). He has a Master's degree in history from the University of Gorky and a Master's degree in filmmaking from VGIK State Cinema School. His 2011 film **FAUST** won Venice's Golden Lion.

SELECTED FEATURE FILMOGRAPHY

1978 **The Lonely Voice of Man**
1983 **Painful Indifference** (aka Mournful Unconcern)
1988 **Days of Eclipse**
1989 **Save and Protect**
1990 **The Second Circle**
1992 **Stone**
1993 **Whispering Pages**
1995 **Spiritual Voices** (documentary)
1996 **Mother and Son**
1999 **Moloch**
2000 **Taurus**
2002 **Russian Ark**
2003 **Father and Son**
2004 **The Sun**
2006 **Elegy of Life**
2007 **Alexandra**
2009 **Reading Book of the Blockade** (documentary)
2011 **Faust**
2015 **Francofonia**

OTHER SELECTED WORKS

1978 **Maria** (medium-length)
1979 **Sonata for Hitler** (short)
1980 **The Degraded** (short)
1981 **Sonata for Viola: Dmitri Shostakovich** (documentary)
1986 **Moscow Elegy**
1986 **Elegy** (short)
1989 **Soviet Elegy** (short)
1990 **Petersburg Elegy** (medium-length)
1991 **An Example of Intonation** (medium-length)
1992 **Elegy from Russia**
1996 **Oriental Elegy** (medium-length)
1996 **Hubert Robert: A Fortunate Life** (short)
1997 **A Humble Life** (documentary)
1998 **Dialogues with Solzhenitsyn** (documentary)
1998 **Confession** (miniseries)
1999 **Dolce** (documentary)
2001 **Elegy of a Voyage** (medium-length)
2005 **Mozart: Requiem** (documentary)



LOUIS-DO DE LENCQUESAING (as Jacques JAUJARD)

Louis-Do de Lencquesaing is a French actor and writer-director. He was recently seen in **L'APOLLONIDE (HOUSE OF TOLERANCE)** by Bertrand Bonello, **POLISSE** by Maiwen, and **FATHER OF MY CHILDREN** by Mia Hansen-Love. His other credits include films by Cédric Kahn, Jean-Luc Godard, Arnaud Desplechin, Laetitia Masson, Benoit Jacquot, Olivier Assayas, Pascal Bonitzer and Michael Haneke, among others. His theater career began at the Avignon Festival under the direction of Valère Novarina before assisting Luc Bondy, Sami Frey, Bruno Bayen. His first stage direction was a Musset play that Benoit Jacquot filmed for Arte. Many theater productions followed - Schnitzler, Wedekind, Sarah Kane, Martin Crimp - for the Festival d'Automne in Paris and some of Paris' most important theaters. De Lencquesaing directed three short films, before making his feature debut with 2012's **AU GALOP (IN A RUSH)**, presented in the Cannes Film Festival's Critics' Week. He will soon be seen in Nicolas Saada's **TAJ MAHAL**, Gela Babluani's **MONEY** and Kad Merad's **MARSEILLE**. He is currently preparing his second feature as a director.

BENJAMIN UTZERATH (as Count Franziskus WOLFF-METTERNICH)

German actor Benjamin Utzerath has an extensive career in theater and television. He has played in prestigious theaters including Hamburg's Ernst Deutsch Theater, Berlin's Schlosspark Theater and principal theaters like the Altonaer Theater, Münchner Volkstheater and Theater Lüneburg. He was a member of the Hamburg company Thalia Theatre for nine years, but has been a free agent since 2004. He also played in a production of Mother Courage at Paris' Théâtre National de Chaillot. His various appearances in German TV since 1998, include Sesamestreet, Die nervöse Grossmacht, Die Spielerin, Tatort Kiel, St. Angela, Die Eltern der Braut, Evelyn Hamanns Geschichten aus dem Leben, Jud Süß - ein Film als Verbrechen, Bargeld lacht, Der Ermittler, Meine beste Feindin, and Ein Mann wie eine Waffe. Born in 1963 in Duesseldorf, he studied at Berlin's „Ernst Busch Hochschule für Schauspielkunst“. He currently lives in Hamburg.

with

**VINCENT NEMETH (as Napoleon),
JOHANNA KORTHALS ALTES (as Marianne),
ANDREY CHELPANOV, JEAN-CLAUDE CAER**

and the voices of **ALEXANDER SOKUROV, FRANCOIS SMESNY, PETER LONTZEK**



PRODUCTION NOTES

The production of **FRANCOFONIA** brought together three countries and three producers familiar with Alexander Sokurov's films and his working methods for having already produced or distributed several of his films. From France, Pierre-Olivier Bardet (Ideale Audience) has produced and distributed Sokurov documentaries and elegies, including **ELEGY OF A VOYAGE**. From Germany, Thomas Kufus (zero one film) has produced several Sokurov feature films, including **MOLOCH** and **MOTHER AND SON**. From the Netherlands, Els Vandevorst (N279 Entertainment) was a co-producer on Sokurov's **FATHER AND SON**.

Over the course of eighteen months' development financed by the producers, the Louvre, the MEDIA programme, France's CNC, and the German-Russian Co-Development Fund, the special creative process of Alexander Sokurov was supported by contributing extremely precise factual information to nourish his own imaginary vision. There is nothing vague in his approach, but on the contrary, a freedom of interpretation that is all the greater as it is nourished by the many facts, images and sounds gradually amassed, translated, and organized so that he can inhabit them in his turn in order to try and find a truth: not a historical truth, nor one derived from hypothetical speculation, but rather an organic truth, the product of his highly personal, often unexpected vision. As an artist, Sokurov detects what we cannot see. In the case of **FRANCOFONIA**, the lines between documentary and fiction fade, not to take us towards what is false, or reconstructed, but on the contrary to seek out the blinding revelation which enlightens, and the interpretative gesture which touches what is right and true.

What meaning can we give to the appropriation of a work of art by an occupying army? While in this case we are talking precisely about the German occupation of France during the Second World War, and while the occupying forces are driven by a specific ideology – Nazism – there is no shortage of examples of other removals, pillage, expropriations, extortion and exports of art works in history. *Francofonia* is a meditation on the unique character of the work of art, and the common desire to incorporate what Walter Benjamin called the aura that emanates from it. Sokurov's film encourages people to think about the links between appropriation and domination, a political vision of the world and an aesthetic representation of it. In addition, it shows the special position occupied by museums in the public space of the West today.



These issues are perceptible in **FRANCOFONIA**, but always with the subtlety specific to a poetic cinema which does not tackle its subjects head-on, but rather by successive brushstrokes, seeking to peel away, layer by layer, the material to confront ourselves with what is nearly impossible to say or show. As in many of his other films, Sokurov uses a combination of techniques in **FRANCOFONIA**: filming with digital cameras, the inclusion of archive footage, image processing by adding, superimposing or incorporating other visual components, by distorting or modifying perspectives, etc. His mastery of the visual results of composite images reveals a stylistic unity which the multiplicity of sources and techniques used could have otherwise diluted.

The film's €1.8 million budget was financed in co-production with **ARTE FRANCE CINEMA** and **LE MUSEE DU LOUVRE**, and with support from **FONDS EURIMAGES**, **CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINEMATOGRAFIE ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMEE**, **MEDIENBOARD BERLIN-BRANDENBURG**, **FILM- UND MEDIENSTIFTUNG NRW**, **FILMFORDERUNGSANSTALT, DEUTSCHER FILMFORDERFONDS**, **NETHERLANDS FILM FUND**, and **PROGRAMME MEDIA DE LA COMMUNAUTE EUROPEENNE (MEDIA SLATE)**.

World sales are being handled by Berlin-based company **Films Boutique**.

FRANCOFONIA will be distributed in France by **Sophie Dulac Distribution**.

A release date has been set for November 11, 2015.



FRANCOFONIA

A FILM BY ALEXANDER SOKUROV

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in co-production with **ARTE FRANCE CINEMA** and **LE MUSEE DU LOUVRE**
with support from **FONDS EURIMAGES, CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINEMATOGRAPHIE ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMEE,**
MEDIENBOARD BERLIN-BRANDENBURG, FILM-UND MEDIENSTIFTUNG NRW, FILMFORDERUNGSANSTALT,
DEUTSCHER FILMFORDERFONDS, NETHERLANDS FILM FUND, PROGRAMME MEDIA DE LA COMMUNAUTE EUROPEENE (MEDIA SLATE)

MAIN CREW

Directed by **ALEXANDER SOKUROV**

Director of Photography **BRUNO DELBONNEL** Assistant Directors **ALEXEI JANKOWSKI, MARINA KORENEVA**
Original Score **MURAT KABARDOKOV** Editor **ALEXEI JANKOWSKI, HANSJORG WEISSBRICH**
Sound Recordists **ANDRE RIGAUT, JAC VLEESHOUWER** Sound Editor **EMIL KLOTZSCH**
Sound Mix **ANSGAR FRERICH** Costumes **COLOMBE LAURIOT PREVOST** Makeup **SIMON LIVET**
Hair Stylist **MAURINE BADASSARI** Color Grading **GILLES GRANIER** Steadicam **JAN RUBENS**
Production Manager **FRANCOISE ETCHEGARAY** Post-Production Supervisors **BORIS MANG, WILLEMIEKE BONGERS**
Line Producers **CLAIRE LION, TASSILO ASCHAUER, ANN CAROLIN RENNINGER, MARIANNE VAN HARDEVELD**

Produced by **PIERRE-OLIVIER BARDET (IDEALE AUDIENCE),**
THOMAS KUFUS (ZERO ONE FILM), ELS VANDEVORST (N279 ENTERTAINMENT)

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FRANCOFONIA

A FILM BY ALEXANDER SOKUROV

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