

MENSCHENS KIND!

(OUR CHILD)

by MARINA BELOBROVAJA
GoldenEggProduction

PRESSKIT



GoldenEggProduction



MENSCHENS KIND!

A FILM BY
MARINA BELOBROVAJA

MENSCHENKIND ! | OUR CHILD | Ô, ENFANT DE L'HOMME

Switzerland | 2021 | 82'

OV German & Russian with subtitles

TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/528773869>

PRODUCTION

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SYNOPSIS

Is parenthood the only logical continuation of a life ? Has the traditional concept of the nuclear family become obsolete? Filmmaker Marina Belobrovaja has chosen a path that many women in a similar situation think about, but do not follow. In *Our Child* she explores the existing social ideas, role patterns and conventions surrounding parenthood and family, starting with the conception of her daughter with the help of a sperm donor.



AROUND THE FILM

Our Child outlines an ambitious path: it shows the fate of a woman, that of the director herself, who feels the compelling need to have a child. Thus, she seeks out a sperm donor, whom she meets in an anonymous hotel room. This story is thereafter rooted in the daily coexistence of the the girl and her mother, which she documents with a video camera. But Marina Belobrovaja's ambition is to reflect on her choices and their consequences in relation to widespread social values. How is she perceived by her environment and how does she deal with the fact that her child is growing up without a father?

The film consists of encounters with people and couples with whom the director enters into dialogue as intelligently as emotionally, resolutely as sensitively. In this way, a space gradually emerges in which life unfolds beyond the normative structure of society. The scenes alternate between the everyday life of the mother and daughter and human relationships that continuously develop through the interactions of adults.

The more the story of *Our Child* develops, the more complex it becomes. And when the mother decides against a traditional family structure with a father figure, it is her family that paradoxically takes a central role. Marina Belobrovaya's family is omnipresent, loving, patient, close, though far away, living in Israel: Her group portraits are as funny as a sitcom.

Jean Perret



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

My story is certainly not unique. On the contrary, I have simply done what many people in similar situations would consider, but have not done - whether it be due to fear of not being able to offer their children a decent life or being excluded from the dominant society. But when childless couples today increasingly rely on the help of sperm banks, a service that homosexual couples led the way in finally making them accessible to them in Switzerland a few months ago; when more and more families with two mothers or fathers profess their way of life and we increasingly discuss surrogacy, which, although not yet in federal legislation, has long since become a reality in Switzerland, then it is time to adopt the concept of an evolved version of the nuclear family as an equally adequate form of parenthood. Because regardless of what life plan, each of us claims for ourselves, they are all part of a diverse reality and should therefore be able to be lived openly and legally.

That neither my history nor ours can be changed is a fact. This is why the aim of this film is an attentive reflection on the many questions and contradictions that arise, both with regard to my decision to become a mother and the decision to film my story. When I ask myself today what my daughter will think of her origins, but also of this film in the foreseeable future, I can only answer this to the extent that I, as a mother, openly deal with our family story in a way that is appropriate to my daughter's age and level of maturity, and that I, as a filmmaker, had to make this film partly in order to fulfill my responsibility to her.

Marina Belobrovaja



Q&A

Interview by former director of Visions du Réel Jean Perret with director Marina Belobrovaja

You decided to have a child and film your experience ; Did completion of the two projects depend on one another ?

Well, while it took me 5 years to complete the first project, I will probably spend the rest of my life with the other one ! *(laughs)*

As an artist and filmmaker there is always a level of personal investment in my work. As a mother, on the other hand, I do not need to find an artistic expression as a parent. Nevertheless, the film project has allowed me to understand my path to motherhood not only on a personal level, but as a social concern. And this socio-political dimension has indeed had an impact on the way our family sees itself in everyday life.

You are the main character in the film. At times it's just you and your daughter or you're interacting with others: Why did you make this choice and what is the meaning of the recurring presence of your family in Israel?

It was important for me to start from my own personal experience and to reflect on other models of life-parenthood. The stories of the protagonists in the film are therefore quite deliberately different from my own as well as from one another. However, in the process of working on the film, I found that I was far less irritated by our differences than I was by the empathy and identification with each other's situation that came with the increasing conflict: Their doubts became my own doubts. The polemical attitude that was necessary at first to start this journey as a mother and as a filmmaker became more ambiguous, more complex. Today, this uncertainty has contributed significantly to the realization of the film.

Concerning including my parents, it was a logical consequence of our everyday family life, which stretches over thousands of kilometers and yet is so close and natural: without their support I would not have had the courage and tenacity necessary to neither be a mother nor for make this film..

The film is a very intimate look into your life — we are even invited to the hotel room where you meet the sperm donor: To what extent did you feel the need to reveal yourself and exchange questions, thoughts and emotions?

In film as well as in art or literature I am interested in the relationship between the individual and the society in general: How can I tell a story as detailed and specific as possible and at the same time reach as many people as possible? These two poles are, I think, only seemingly contradictory. As an author, I have to show myself, reveal my own ambivalences, my fragility, be open to criticism. Only then will other people be able to recognize themselves in my story and identify with it.

Have you considered the audience so that they can follow the story of OUR CHILD beyond your presence?

Basically, all people are affected by this topic more than by any other : we have all been confronted at some point in our lives with the question of whether and in what way we can and want to reproduce ourselves. My story is just one example of the countless possibilities to deal with this fundamental and complex question.

Did you find it difficult or, on the contrary, particularly pleasant to film a large part of the movie yourself ?

I admire thoughtful, professional camera work. At the same time, the creation of the greatest possible intimacy and intensity in the exchange with the protagonists is clearly at the center of my projects. Sometimes there are three more people on the set, sometimes there are three too many. So I made a few compromises during the filming process in order to be able to create such intimate moments regardless of the cinematic quality.

Where did the film take you, what experiences and discoveries did you make that you didn't think of when you started making the film ?

The very intense exchange with Tania Stöcklin (editing and dramaturgy) as well as with Gabriela Bussmann (production) had a significant influence not only on the form the film took. This long and, for all those involved, always exhausting discussion also shaped and formed my life and self-image as a mother to a much greater extent than I would have initially expected. I am deeply grateful to both of them for their willingness to go through this process with me.

MARINA BELOBROVAJA

Marina Belobrovaja was born in Kiev. In the wake of the nuclear disaster in nearby Chernobyl, the family moved several times until they left the Soviet Union for Israel immediately after the dismantling of the Iron Curtain in 1990. At the age of 19, Marina's desire to study fine arts led her to Berlin to study at the University of the Arts and later at the Zurich University of Art. In 2012, she traveled back to Ukraine for the first time for the shooting of her first film *Warm-Glow*, in which she accompanies a group of Swiss politicians, journalists, and tourists to the Chernobyl exclusion zone. In 2013, she decided to become a single mother. In her recently released film *Our Child* she describes her journey of having a child with the help of a sperm donor.

Today, Marina lives as an artist and filmmaker with her daughter, Nelly, in Zurich. In her multimedia projects, she deals with socio-political issues, such as production and consumption conditions, national belonging, and biopolitics, as well as the strategies and methodologies of artistic practice. She has been teaching and researching at the Lucerne School of Design & Art for over 10 years, and in 2018, she completed her PhD on contemporary engaged art form in Switzerland at the Linz University of the Arts.



FILMOGRAPHY

- 2021 Menschenskind! (*Our Child*) | Documentary, 82'
- 2014 Warm – Glow | Documentary, 50'
 Solothurner Filmtage, Uranium Filmfestival, Opuzen IFF

GoldenEggProduction

GoldenEggProduction is a film production company created in 2012 in Geneva, committed to identifying, developing and distributing films and, more broadly, ambitious audiovisual works by filmmakers with original and unique signatures whose points of view are rooted in contemporary society. Fictions and documentaries are recognized in their traditions but also in their ability to be in dialogue with each other.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2021 Our Child | Marina Belobrovaja
- 2020 Supreme | Youssef Youssef
* Best Swiss School Film at Kurzfilmtage Winterthur *
- 2019 Silent Storm | Anaïs Moog
* Pardino d'Argento at Locarno Film Festival *
- 2018 The Jarariju Sisters | Jorge Cadena
* Special Mentions at Berlinale & Kiev Molodist *, Karlovy Vary IFF
- 2018 The Invisible Sanctuary | Sayaka Mizuno
- 2018 Putin's Witnesses | Vitaly Mansky
* Grand Prix at Karlovy Vary IFF *, TIFF, IDFA, DOK. Leipzig, BFI London
- 2018 Tendresse | Maxime Rappaz
Kurzfilmtage Winterthur, Solothurner Filmtage, Palm Springs ShortFest
- 2018 Dressed for Pleasure | Marie de Maricourt
* Special Mentions at Berlinale, Outfest LA & interFilm Berlin *
- 2018 Beyond the Obvious | Vadim Jendreyko
Solothurner Filmtage, FIFA Montréal, DOKU Arts Berlin
- 2017 Dans le lit du Rhône | Mélanie Pitteloud
Visions du Réel, Festival dei Popoli, DC EFF
- 2017 Les Dépossédés | Mathieu Roy
Jihlava IFF, RIDM Montreal
- 2016 Tadmor | Monika Borgmann & Lokman Slim
* Best Swiss film & Special Mention of the Jury - Visions du Réel *

ONGOING PROJECTS

MALESTAR TROPICAL by Jorge Cadena | THE LAST CAMPAIGN by Lionel Rupp | LAISSEZ-MOI by Maxime Rappaz | SPECTRUM by Philbert Aimé Mbabazi | AS SEMIMORTAS by Aurélie Pernet Oliveira | CHUTE by Nora Longatti | KEIGEI KAKOCHO by Sophie Dascal

CREDITS

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY

Marina Belobrovaja

DOP

Gabriela Betschart, Kaleo La Belle,
Christoph Walther, Sergei Freedman &
Marina Belobrovaja

SOUND

Bruce Wuilloud & Benoit Frech

EDITING & DRAMATURGY

Tania Stöcklin

ORIGINAL MUSIC

Trixa Arnold & Ilja Komarov

SOUND MIX & SOUNDESIGN

Guido Keller

PICTURE DESIGN

Patrick Lindenmaier

PRODUCED BY

Gabriela Bussmann | GoldenEggProduction

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