

MEMORY

a film directed by **Vladlena Sandu**



GIORNATE
degli **AUTORI**

MEMORY

Breaking The Cycle of Violence

A FILM DIRECTED BY VLADLENA SANDU

STARRING Amina Taisumova, Selima Agamirzaeva, Vladlena Sandu

PRODUCED BY YANNA BURYAK

CO-PRODUCERS: LUDOVIC HENRY, RAYMOND VAN DER KAAIJ, KIRSI SAIVOSALMI

PRODUCTION COMPANIES: MIMESIS, LIMITLESS, REVOLVER AMSTERDAM

SALES AGENT: LOCO FILMS

COUNTRIES OF PRODUCTION: FRANCE, NETHERLANDS

FORMAT: FICTION

RUNNING TIME: 98'


SHOT ON: 16MM FILM

PREMIERE: 27th of August 2025 at Giornate Degli Autori

Supported by Aide Aux Cinémas Du Monde - CNC - Institut Français, Netherlands Film Fund, Région Île-de-France, IDFA Bertha Fund, Pastorale Productions and Doha Film Institute








LOGLINE Vladlena Sandu, a survivor of the war in Chechnya, studies her traumatic memories in order to transcend and transform them via cinema.

SYNOPSIS Six-year-old Vladlena moves from Crimea to Grozny following her parents' divorce, unaware that war will soon consume her childhood. As the Soviet Union collapses, the Chechen Republic fractures. Her Russian-speaking friends flee while deported Chechens return, reclaiming their homeland. Tensions escalate, and an armed conflict erupts. Violence engulfs the city - neighbors are murdered, her family is targeted, and Grozny becomes a battlefield. After four years of war, her mother is gravely wounded, and an armed attack forces Vladlena to flee, becoming a displaced person in Russia.

In this autobiographical poetic hybrid film, Vladlena revisits her traumatic childhood memories to confront a haunting question: How can the cycle of violence that shapes children and is passed through generations be broken?



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I was born in the USSR, Crimea, there was a total silence. I was surrounded by silence, and it was uncommon to speak openly about the present. The experience of trauma was transmitted across generations. Violence and fear became inherited patterns, contributing to a continued cycle of harm.

In 1994, having experienced the Soviet regime during my early years. I witnessed the beginning of the first war of occupation launched by the Russian Federation against the Chechen Republic and its people.

While working on the film *Memory*, I was required to submit a fictional script to the Russian Ministry of Culture in order to receive permission to shoot. This necessity to conceal the project's true subject became part of the film's narrative. Both of my homelands—Crimea and the Chechen Republic—remain under occupation.

These are factual circumstances, but they carry human consequences across generations. The film seeks to reflect on how we process such realities: how we deal with inherited violence, and whether it is possible to transform aggression into care, or fear into love.

Memory is a personal attempt to articulate these questions. It documents how I began to step outside the cycle I was born into. This film is also part of a tetralogy based on my life experience.

Despite everything, I continue to believe that art can play a role in recovery. That it can help us imagine a future shaped by choice rather than coercion.

Working on *Memory* helped me understand how the cycle of violence moves across generations and led me to ask a fundamental question: What can we do to stop it?



DIRECTOR'S BIO & FILMOGRAPHY

Vladlena* Sandu was born in her father's homeland of Crimea in 1982. After her parents divorced, she moved to her mother's native city of Grozny in the Chechen Republic. She lived through four years of war as a child and teenager. In 1998 she emigrated to mainland Russia and received the status of an Internally Displaced Person.

In 2016 she graduated from the VGIK, where she studied film directing on a BA course led by Alexei Uchitel. In 2019 she graduated from Boris Yukhananov's Studio of Independent Direction. In March 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine she became a refugee for the second time. Today she lives and works in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Her films have most notably participated in official selections at film festivals such as Berlinale, Rotterdam, Series Mania, Leipzig Dok, DocLisboa, Movies That Matter and have won awards at festivals such as goEast, ZagrebDox, Golden Apricot, VGIK ISFF and obtained the Silver Eye Award by the Institute of Documentary Film.

**The name 'Vladlena' is a name invented during Soviet times, to honor the Soviet Union chief ideologist, Vladimir Lenin. The word is essentially a portmanteau of VLADimir and LENin, with an 'a' added to the end, to form the female version of the name. It was given to her by her father, who rebelled against Soviet ideology.*

Film **2022 No Nation Without Culture** / documentary short film

2022 Identification / TV Series

2018 Eight Images From The Life Of Nastya Sokolova / documentary short film

2016 Holy God / documentary short film

2015 Tamerlan's Love / documentary short film

2015 Kira / fiction short film

2014 Orlovi / documentary short film

2012 Diana / documentary short film

Theatre **Transposition** – Premiere at Amsterdam Fringe 2025

Extremist Alice – Amsterdam Fringe 2024

The Rainbow Cinema – Best of Amsterdam Fringe 2023



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