

AN ONASSIS CULTURE PRODUCTION

Bull's Heart

A DOCUMENTARY BY EVA STEFANI



THESSALONIKI
INTERNATIONAL
DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL
INTERNATIONAL
COMPETITION 2025
TIDF27





Can art give meaning to our lives? A documentary produced by Onassis Culture, which focuses on the performance Transverse Orientation by Dimitris Papaioannou. Filmmaker Eva Stefani follows the preparations behind Transverse Orientation and its tour across theatrical stages in Europe, observing from a close distance Dimitris Papaioannou and his collaborators in their effort to give shape and breathe life into the work. For two years, her camera captured scenes from the rehearsals at the Onassis Stegi during the pandemic, as well as performances in Paris, London, Vilnius, and other international destinations, leading to the last show in San Francisco. The central question that runs through the documentary ***Bull's Heart*** is “Why do we do what we do?” elevating art as a means of resisting the futility of things and a way to reapply meaning to our own lives. Dimitris Papaioannou’s acquaintance with Eva Stefani decades ago and their collaboration many years later are portrayed in this peculiar documentary. Dimitris Papaioannou, with his insatiable curiosity and magnificent gaze, depicts the human body on stage, trying to capture every movement and emotion. Eva Stefani, on the other hand, with her cinematic gaze, records Dimitris himself, capturing his creative process. The film explores the dynamics that emerge from a work of art, unveiling the moments of worry and uncertainty but also absolute trust that define the world of rehearsals, hope in times of crisis, and loss transformed into creation. Through Stefani’s lens, Papaioannou reveals his joys, fears, and desires. The film, however, is not only a documentary about a performance or an artist, but a study of the nature of creation. And as Dimitris Papaioannou says in a scene from Bull’s Heart, “That’s the joy of art, I think; it makes you feel there’s something more than the mundane life you lead.”





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I've known Dimitris Papaioannou since I was seventeen, and I've always wanted to make a documentary about/with him. So, when he suggested that I film the rehearsals for the "Transverse Orientation" performance, I felt exhilarated. However, COVID-19 was still in full swing all over Europe at the time, resulting in a series of postponements of the show. With all the uncertainty brought on by the delays and the grim reality of the epidemic, the question arose once again: "What is the meaning of art in times of crisis?" The documentary begins by capturing a group of dancers and technicians who find themselves in the weird position of having to work on a show that might never take place. At the same time, it serves as a portrait of an artist who possesses the ability to instill inspiration in his collaborators and captivate his audience with works imbued with ache, emotion, and beauty. We shot the documentary with a very tight crew, just two or three people, using the direct cinema approach to remain as unobtrusive as possible. We experimented extensively with the image itself, particularly out-of-focus shots, which we believed accurately captured the eerie vibe we felt while watching the performance. My objective with this documentary was to depict, to some degree, what it's like to watch "Transverse Orientation," its sensuality, darkness, and riddle. Beyond that, to leave subtle cracks that offer a glimpse into the intricate psyche of a truly brilliant artist.

—Eva Stefani



DIRECTOR'S BIO

Eva Stefani was born in the USA and lives in Athens, Greece. She has directed more than thirty films, spanning from ethnographic to experimental cinema. Her work has been screened at numerous international film festivals, receiving prestigious awards (Oberhausen, Cinéma du Réel, FIPRESCI, etc.). Festivals such as the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen and L'Europe autour de l'Europe, and universities such as New York University and Columbia, have organized retrospectives of her work. Since 2000, she has participated in international visual arts exhibitions, with the most notable examples being documenta14 and the Venice Biennale. Her most recent visual artwork, "The Luminous Cave," is an installation commissioned by the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, as part of the exhibition cycle "What If Women Ruled the World?". In addition to her artistic activity, Eva Stefani is a professor of film studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Faculty of Media and Communication Studies). She studied at the Political Science Department of Athens Law School and then completed postgraduate studies in Film Theory and Anthropology at NYU, as well as film studies with a focus on documentary at the Ateliers Varan in France and the National Film & Television School in the UK. Her doctoral thesis examines representations of Greece in ethnographic cinema (Panteion University, 1997). Her latest film, "Bull's Heart," is a peculiar portrait of director and choreographer Dimitris Papaioannou.





DIMITRIS PAPAIOANNOU'S BIO

Director, choreographer, performer and visual artist Dimitris Papaioannou blends experimental dance, physical theatre, visual and performance arts in surreal, dreamlike and immersive environments. He has full command of the artistic vision including set, costume, sculptural installations and lighting design. Born in Athens in 1964, Papaioannou studied under the renowned Greek painter Yannis Tsarouchis and at the Athens School of Fine Arts and went on to publish numerous comics and graphic novels, the first of their genre in Greece to include punk and hardcore homoerotic images. Dimitris Papaioannou is the first Greek artist of the performing arts to penetrate the international art scene as an auteur, with his creations co-produced and commissioned internationally and enjoying sold-out performances in long tours at the most renowned festivals and theaters on the planet. Papaioannou is one of the rare occasions of artists who feature in their body of work creations made of the minimum resources (Primal Matter, 2012), and of the largest possible scale (Athens 2004 - Opening Ceremony of the Summer Olympic Games). He is also the first artist to create a work for the Tanztheater Wuppertal after the death of Pina Bausch. He has been nominated twice for the Emmy Award (2016) and twice for the Olivier Award (2019 και 2022) and is the first Greek artist to receive the European Theater Prize (2017).



CREDITS

Produced by Onassis Culture
Direction, Screenplay, & Cinematography: Eva Stefani
With Dimitris Papaioannou
And Breanna O’Mara, Tina Papanikolaou, Damiano Ottavio Bigi, Šuka Horn,
Jan Möllmer, Łukasz Przytarski, Christos Strinopoulos, Michalis Theophanous
Executive Producers: Afroditi Panagiotakou, Dimitris Theodoropoulos
Producer: Vassilis Panagiotakopoulos
Camera Operators: Eva Stefani, Aimilia Milou, Pavlos Kosmidis
Editor: Panagiotis Papafragos
Editing Contributor: Yorgos Mavropsarides
Sound Recordist: Aimilia Milou
Additional Filming from the performance: Julian Mommert
Post-Production Coordinator: Despina Sifniadou
Sound Mixing: Kostas Varybopiotis
Picture Post Services: AUTHORWAVE
Colorist: Manos Hamilakis
Additional Colorist: Maria Tzortzatou
Head of Post: Panos Bisdas
Post Manager: Liza Chrysochoou
Technical Supervisor: Panagiotis Karachalios
Assistant Editor: Fani Bitou
English Subtitles: Memi Katsoni
Subtitles Editing: Iannis Papadakis
Translation Editing: Rachel Howard
Line Production / Accounting and Secretarial Support: Movie CO / Christos Hasapakis

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Screening Format: DCP
Shooting Format: Digital
Aspect Ratio: 1.85:1
Sound: 5.1
Spoken language: Greek , English
Subtitles: English
Duration: 79’



ONASSIS CINEMA A DOCUMENTARY SERIES ON EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS.

Onassis Culture supports established artists and new talents. It embraces the process of creation and artistic development by offering fellowships. It collaborates with significant institutions, aiming to strengthen Greek cinema inside and outside the borders. It has established film awards to support the development of new scripts, and for the last two years, it has held open calls for short films. Through documentary production, Onassis Culture opens up a dialogue between the world we live in and the worlds we want to live in. The Onassis Foundation's documentaries take us through the fragile reality of adolescence (***Girlhood***, 2021), the power of speech and democracy (***Democracy is Coming***, TBC), the complexity of artistic creation (***The Heart of the Bull***, TBC), the human desire to fly (***Birds or How to Be One***, 2020), the human chain that cleans the cities of the world (***Clean Cities***, 2021), and the importance of breaking your silence (***TACK***, 2024). Everyday heroes and heroines from all over the world—from Athens to Chile and from New York to Istanbul—speak openly and take a stand on issues relevant to the “here and now.” Through the power of the image and the authenticity of the documentary form, we are transported—we feel and doubt, and finally we are brought close to our own reality, to the world we choose to live. [Read more](#)

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