

PICTUREHOUSE

A Songbird Studios Production
In Association with Imaginary Lane

PORCELAIN WAR

Directed by Brendan Bellomo and Slava Leontyev



Release Date: **November 22, 2024**

Rating: **R** for language

Running time: **87 minutes**

Photos and Captions: [Here](#)

Trailer: [Here](#)

Academy Award Nominee, DGA Winner, PGA and ASC Nominee Poster: [Here](#)

Main Poster: [Here](#)

Clips: [Here](#)

PRESS CONTACTS

ACME PR

Nancy Willen nancywillen@acmepr.net

Emily McDonald emilymcdonald@acmepr.net

Verdant

Julia Pacetti julia@jmpverdant.com

Justin Nguyen

Route 504

Angie Power angie@route504pr.com

Picturehouse

Jeanne R. Berney jrberney@picturehouse.com

Erin Culling eculling@picturehouse.com

Larsen Associates

Karen Larsen karen@larsenassoc.com

Tim Buckwalter tim@larsenassoc.co

PR Collaborative

Jamie Shor jamie@prcollaborative.com

Renée Tsao renee@prcollaborative.com

Social Media

Website: PorcelainWar.com

Instagram: [PorcelainWarFilm](https://www.instagram.com/PorcelainWarFilm)

#PorcelainWar

PICTUREHOUSE

PORCELAIN WAR

LOGLINE: (47 words)

Under roaring fighting jets, Ukrainian artists Slava, Anya and Andrey stay behind, defiantly finding beauty amid destruction. Armed with art, cameras and for the first time in their lives, guns, they show that while it's easy to frighten people, it's harder to destroy their passion for living.

SHORT SYNOPSIS: (103 words)

Winner of the 2024 Sundance Grand Jury Prize: U.S. Documentary, PORCELAIN WAR is a stunning tribute to the resilience of the human spirit, embodying the enduring hope and passion of ordinary people living through extraordinary circumstances. As war ravages their homeland, three artists choose to stay in their native Ukraine, armed with their art, their cameras, and for the first time in their lives, their guns.

From the Academy Award®-winning producer of THE COVE and the Emmy® Award-winning producer of CHASING ICE, and the team behind the Grammy® Award-winning QUINCY, PORCELAIN WAR is one of the most decorated documentary features of 2024.

LONG SYNOPSIS: (169 words)

Amidst the chaos and destruction of the brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine, three artists defiantly find inspiration and beauty as they defend their culture and their country. In a war waged by professional soldiers against ordinary civilians, Slava Leontyev, Anya Stasenko and Andrey Stefanov choose to stay behind, armed with their art, their cameras and, for the first time in their lives, their guns. Despite daily shelling, Anya finds resistance and purpose in her art, Andrey takes the dangerous journey to get his young family to safety abroad, and Slava becomes a weapons instructor for ordinary people who have become unlikely soldiers. As the war intensifies, Andrey picks up his camera to film their story, and on tiny porcelain figurines, Anya and Slava capture their idyllic past, uncertain present and hope for the future.

Co-directed by Leontyev and Brendan Bellomo, with extraordinary footage from first-time cinematographer Stefanov, **Porcelain War** embodies the passion and fight that only an artist can put back into the world when it's crumbling around them.

ACCOLADES:

Porcelain War has earned more than 50 awards and recognitions, including:

Academy Award® Nominee | Best Documentary Feature
Directors Guild of America Award WINNER | Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary
Producers Guild of America Award Nominee | Outstanding Producer of Documentary Motion Pictures
American Society of Cinematographers Award Nominee | Documentary Award
Sundance Film Festival WINNER | Grand Jury Prize: U.S. Documentary
Cinema Eye Awards WINNER | Audience Choice Prize
duPont-Columbia Awards WINNER | honoring achievement in audio and video reporting
Cinema for Peace Nominee | Most Valuable Documentary Film of the Year

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

“Ukraine is like porcelain,
easy to break yet impossible to destroy.”
— Slava Leontyev

On the morning of November 19, 2013, Slava Leontyev took a photograph of a bouquet of roses resting on the windowsill of the cottage in Crimea he shared with Anya Stasenko. Some of the golden rose petals had fallen off and were scattered along the purple window ledge, he recalls, and he photographed them as well. Slava and Anya then got into their car and drove the 360 miles to their home in Kharkiv, planning to return to Crimea in the spring, as they did every year. They had no idea that in three months Crimea would be invaded, occupied and illegally annexed by Russia.

That was the last time they locked the door to their private garden and the beginning of a journey that made them and so many other Ukrainians, in Leontyev’s words, “ordinary people in an extraordinary situation.” Almost two years ago, Russia expanded its military operations to the whole of Ukraine, engulfing it in a brutal, full-scale military invasion and making Kharkiv, just 19 miles south of the Russian border and Ukraine’s second- largest city, one of its first targets.

In the feature-length documentary *Porcelain War*, Leontyev and co-director Brendan Bellomo take audiences through a year in the life of Leontyev, Stasenko and their friend, painter Andrey Stefanov, as they defiantly face a dangerous, often unimaginably violent new way of life. Shot primarily by first-time cinematographer Stefanov, *Porcelain War* captures the idyllic meadows and forests that have long nurtured the artists’ creative drive, contrasted with devastating images of the blasted cityscape of Kharkiv. A luminous and illuminating 90-minute portrait of life during wartime, the film allows audiences to slip into the shoes of the reluctant combatants as they defiantly persist in their search for truth and beauty in their war-ravaged homeland, all set to the unique sound of world-famous Ukrainian musical quartet DakhaBrakha.

According to Leontyev, a ceramicist and graphic designer, documenting the chaos and violence all around him was the furthest thing from his mind. “I had stopped doing all photography,” he explains. “I have only ever been interested in taking photos of beautiful things. And war is horrible, so why film it?”

His mind began to change when Bellomo, more than 6,000 miles away in Los Angeles, and his creative partner and wife, Aniela Sidorska, also a writer and producer of the film, reached out after watching the invasion unfold. “We met Slava and Anya while researching a different film,” says Bellomo. “Aniela had discovered their work online. We thought it was absolutely beautiful. We contacted them and a close friendship began. Then the war broke out in 2022. Aniela was born in Communist Poland, so she knows what it is like to live in a country oppressed by Russia.”

Bellomo and Sidorska were stunned when they realized that Leontyev and Stasenko were not fleeing Kharkiv and, even more incredibly, they were continuing to create art. “Eventually, Slava revealed to us that he was in the Ukrainian Special Forces,” says Bellomo. “Not only was he a soldier, but he was training other soldiers and civilians. As we spoke more, all four of us realized there was an important story to be told.”

At first, Leontyev admits, he feared that the sheer responsibility of telling this story would overwhelm him. “I had doubts that we would be able to work effectively under these conditions,” he explains. “We were already under so much stress. But Brendan and Aniela convinced me that if we succeeded in making this film, my work could save more lives than I could save as a soldier

FIRST-TIME FILMMAKERS

“Our life was stolen from us when Russia occupied Crimea.”

— Slava Leontyev

Nothing in Leontyev and Stasenko’s histories had prepared them for either war or filmmaking. For years they have worked together to create whimsical, delicately beautiful “porcelain beasts,” as they call them, molded and polished by Leontyev before being lovingly hand painted by Stasenko. “I shouldn’t even have ended up in the Special Forces,” Leontyev says. “I wasn’t young, my physical state wasn’t good, I didn’t have the training or the intellectual capacity. And the same goes for all my comrades. But after the annexation of Crimea, the Russian invasion was escalating without cease and we had to prepare to resist it. We’d been training since 2015. All of us had to purchase our own weapons and prepare independently.”

After discussing the idea of the film with Bellomo and Sidorska, Leontyev’s point of view began to change. “I saw that we could do something for Ukraine and for the people that are suffering from brutal aggression, that are facing genocide,” he notes. “It was a chance to declare: ‘We are here, we are being destroyed, we are resisting. Help us while we are still here, for you will be next.’ But I had to find the beauty in the destruction and confront that ruined backdrop like a tiny, perhaps partially damaged figurine.”

Bellomo knew his first step would be finding a way to get camera equipment into Ukraine and assembling a makeshift crew. “We were fortunate to connect with volunteers in the United States, Ukrainian people that had left their day jobs to transport all sorts of supportive goods into Ukraine through Poland. Logistically, it was very difficult and very dangerous. But we were able to get them everything they needed with the help of people who risked their lives to do it.”

An accomplished amateur shutterbug who prefers photographing nature, Leontyev had no previous filmmaking experience. Despite having to find his way in an unfamiliar discipline, he was uploading extraordinary footage almost daily. He began to see, he says, beauty in the most unlikely places. “I remember when a large market in Kharkiv was struck by a missile,” he says. “The fire painted the sky the colors of the Ukrainian flag with an enormous blue cloud of smoke covering half the sky and a golden color next to it. Against that background was the shining dome of a cathedral, and a huge Ukrainian banner fluttering in the wind over the center of the city. Another time, in the ‘gray zone’ behind enemy lines, I watched wheat fields burning early in the morning. And that horrible sight was also so magnificent.”

Leontyev eventually asked his old friend Stefanov to step in as cinematographer. “Initially, Anya and I were supposed to just film the world around us and our work,” he recalls. “At some point Brendan and Aniela asked us if there was a cameraman around who’d be able to do some shots that we wouldn’t be able to do, like filming ourselves. I asked my friend Andrey, who was hesitant, but he also knew the war left him no choice.”

Stefanov’s work as a painter and a photo artist has required him to develop an inquisitive eye, adds Leontyev. “He finds it interesting not just to notice things, but to get to the very source of them. And Andrey has the ability to attain perfection in everything he does. At the start I would try and tell him what to do, but it was obvious his solutions were better than mine. So I left all of that with Andrey.”

As footage started to roll in, Bellomo quickly saw that Leontyev and Stefanov were capturing their lives in a way that was deeply unique, intimate and completely natural. “I believe they were only able to do that because there were no outsiders observing,” he says. “I made the decision not to go to Ukraine, but instead co-direct this movie with Slava and Andrey in a different way.”

A former adjunct professor of filmmaking at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, Bellomo designed a long-distance crash course in documentary film for his creative partners in Ukraine. From his base in Los Angeles, he instructed them in the basics of filmmaking, guiding the shooting process and finding the story in the footage they sent. He designed a series of tutorials for them that covered the nuances of cinematography, including exposure, coverage patterns, lens choice, aerial photography and sound recording. The collaboration deepened as they studied lighting and composition, storyboards and floor plans. “Everything about this approach was designed to help Slava and Andrey capture their truth in an intimate way. We want the audience to feel as if they are there, not just observing.”

Leontyev says he began to think of himself as the eyes of the project, while Bellomo became the brain. “My job was to be alert and not miss anything, in order to show a broad perspective of what is happening in Ukraine. Brendan shared what would be needed to tell this story. It was challenging enough to be learning all the technical aspects, and I was also training my soldiers and thinking about completing my combat missions. Brendan was doing the thinking for me and Andrey. And he was very good at it.”

Leontyev says he thrived under his co-director’s instruction. “I love being part of a collaborative effort, but working with Brendan and Aniela was on a totally different level,” he says. “Despite the language barrier, despite different personal experiences, we developed a mutual understanding quickly and naturally. He guided and motivated us in a way that helped me gain confidence very quickly. With a teacher like that, it’s hard to make mistakes.”

LIFE DURING WARTIME

“Our goal is to make this film, tell our story and simply survive.”

— Slava Leontyev

Originally conceived as a 15-minute short, *Porcelain War* rapidly evolved into a full-length feature. Ultimately, over 500 hours of footage were recorded on 15 cameras, from which over 2,000 pages of transcripts were created. “As artists, Slava and Andrey are natural storytellers,” Bellomo says. “Their progress was astounding. We soon had to recruit Slava’s Special Forces unit as additional camera operators. They learned to adapt their expert drone piloting skills to cinematic drone shots and use GoPro cameras to record their combat missions.”

Much of the crafting of the story emerged through conversations between Bellomo, his fellow screenwriters Aniel, Paula DuPré Pesmen and Leontyev, as well as the rest of the crew on the ground in Ukraine. “We didn’t just conduct typical interviews; we spent time together getting to know each other,” Bellomo says. “Those interviews informed the next shoots we needed to do to ensure that all the elements of what they were experiencing were captured on film.”

Meanwhile, the Ukrainians continued to send footage. “Although we had no plan about what the film would be,” says Leontyev, “Anya immediately said the most important thing: ‘Nothing should be pitiful.’ We agreed between ourselves to avoid disgusting or shocking things. We consciously refused to hurry to the sites of the missile strikes. Almost always, we waited for the fires to be put out, for the wounded to be evacuated, for the blood to be washed off. We would not pretend to be journalists.”

With each passing week, Bellomo says he and Sidorska were learning more and more about life in Ukraine. “We asked them what their lives were like before the war? What were they fighting for? And what do they want the future to be? We stayed close to them and remained curious, and because they were so open about sharing what they were living through and doing to stay alive, the audience is also able to feel it themselves.”

For Leontyev, it was essential to include the people around him as much as possible, including his Special Forces unit, dubbed “Saigon.” “I feared that in the original 15-minute format, I would not be able to include them all, which saddened me. When the project began to grow there was no stopping me. I wanted to film them all.”

His specialty, Leontyev says, is providing weapons training to inexperienced soldiers, a skill he only acquired because of the war. “It is something I don’t particularly like. I had to make myself good at it by striving for perfection. When I manage to learn something, it’s easy for me to start teaching others.

“In the first days of the war, I began training sessions for my comrades who had no shooting skills,” he continues. “Quite a few people rushed to protect our city, to protect their families, to protect their homes with motivation and enthusiasm, but had no weapons experience at all. A weapon can only do one thing — kill. And the closest target is the person holding it. So, the accidents began.”

He started dropping in at the bases of the newly created infantry, mostly metro stations at the time. “I would travel from one station to the other and ask, ‘Do you need a weapons instructor?’ When they did, I’d start working there. Then some of us were selected by our Special Forces instructors and offered more complex training and positions. The sheer honor of that opportunity was worth it. It’s an honor that I do not deserve.”

Leontyev’s current unit is a group of civilians from all walks of life, including an IT analyst, a furniture salesperson, a dairy farmer and a building contractor. In the field, they monitor the movement of Russian troops, provide safe conduct and rescue missions for the army, recover unexploded munitions and landmines, and engage in close-quarters combat. When they can, they continue their lives as much as possible in the way they did before the war.

For his friends in Ukraine, resistance is only partly about being soldiers, says Bellomo. This war is not

just meant to capture territory, it is also a genocidal war, he points out, meant to destroy the entire culture of a people. “Anya, Slava and Andrey are gentle and caring. And at the same time, they have enormous courage. By creating art, they are trying to avoid the erasure of their culture. As people who define and create culture, artists, writers, musicians and teachers are a serious target in this war. All they want is to enjoy life and to maintain their culture and identity. Continuing their work is a way to maintain who they are and stop that erasure.”

With that in mind, Bellomo prioritized including glimpses of the beauty, resilience and passion for living that he saw embodied in the Ukrainian people. “Anya, Slava and Andrey draw inspiration from nature,” he says. “That’s almost like breathing for them. When we first started seeing what they were capturing in the footage, they were going out and spending time in the forest or in a field. In the smallest detail of a snail or a bug or a leaf, they found truth, as well as something visual that they could bring into their art. Even with landmines around and a war going on, they were not going to hide. They were and are continuing to try and find joy.”

IN A WORLD OF BEAUTY AND JOY

“The war echoes through nature outside of Kharkiv.”

— Anya Stasenko

The art created by Stefanov, Stasenko and Leontyev provides the film its heart, says Bellomo, serving as the anchor and the soul of the story. “All of them are deeply sensitive, deeply articulate people driven to find meaning in what’s going on around them, whether it’s positive or horrific. Andrey’s painting is inspired by the landscapes of Ukraine and Crimea. There’s something beyond just the brushstrokes that to me defines him as a great painter, and his photography has the same quality.

“Slava is deeply curious and intuitive,” adds Bellomo. “He finds beauty everywhere. And for Anya, as she says in the film, painting is her language. She’s able to articulate the entire range of her experience through it. The characters she creates feel like people you could know. They derive inspiration from a deep legacy of Ukrainian art, but at the same time they’re wholly unique.”

Leontyev creates winsome three-dimensional figurines that reflect a natural, sometimes mythical world — plump snails, wide-eyed dragonlets, winged horses and more - and painstakingly perfects them by hand sanding and polishing them for Stasenko’s paint brush. She then paints them in her signature style, a combination of vibrant hues, intricate patterns, botanical decoration and playful creatures. When the war began, she says, she lost the desire and ability to paint for a while. When she began again, her work drastically changed. “Before the war, Anya’s paintings were quite fanciful, but now they take on a more specific meaning,” Leontyev explains. “Recently she painted an old lady flying with her cow, her hens, her entire household’s worth of belongings. It represents what happens to people after a Russian bomb hits them. Our work will never show blood or dead bodies, but the flowers that Anya paints are now tainted by our experiences in this war.”

In *Porcelain War*, the figurines are often deliberately posed amid the rubble of battle. “We tried to use that to introduce our philosophy — the aversion to drama, the aversion to despair — into the film,” says Leontyev. “We wanted to focus on the beauty and to show our wounds with delicacy and respect. Ukrainians treat shock content with disdain. We face things that are painful in a different way. I believe our work is very Ukrainian. Culturally, Ukrainians don’t like pretentiousness, so our work tends to be grounded and perhaps somewhat ironic.”

Calling his partner the storyteller of each figurine, he adds that Stasenko’s paintings are usually very simple in story and specific in design. “They are not generally filled with as many characters as the animated pieces in the film. For these, she included more detail to provide the animators with options that would support the story development. It was an exceptionally complex task. She included such meaning in these works, and in such detail, that to this day I cry when I look at them.”

ART IMITATES LIFE

“It is critically important to smile at times.”

— Anya Stasenko

Before embarking on *Porcelain War*, Bellomo, Sidorska, Leontyev and Stasenko had been planning to collaborate on a different film, one that would include an animated element. Instead, the filmmakers were inspired to include animation in this film. “Anya has said that her paintings contain her memories, her feelings and her ideas of what could happen in the future,” Bellomo says. “Animation enabled us to make the paintings evolve and change, adding a whole other layer of emotion and visual progression. It is part of the DNA of the film, and allowed all of us to contribute something unique to our individual backgrounds.”

By bringing the paintings to life, the movie offers the audience a way to understand different facets of the creators’ imaginations, their feelings and their perspectives, with the added element of time, Bellomo continues. “Early in the film, they are depictions of the past, of a time of beauty and the joy of a perfect and idyllic life in Crimea. They become the present, which is the war and what happened in the initial part of the invasion. Finally, they stand for the future, for their dreams for what Ukraine could be. These figurines are actually ways to look at time and to look at their feelings about these three critical periods.”

Leontyev says the idea of the animation was difficult for him to imagine when it was first proposed. “In no way could I get my head around why and how they would be incorporated into the story. Yet, from the very start our trust in Brendan and Aniela’s decisions was so high that I thought, ‘Holy cow! What do they have in mind? Let’s wait and see what they do.’”

The filmmakers worked with BluBlu Studios, an award-winning animation company based in Poland, to achieve their vision. “We shared Anya and Slava’s art with them and they were inspired to combine the colors, textures and style of Anya’s paintings with movement,” Bellomo says. “The animators were able to make hand drawn, traditional cell animations, based on hundreds and hundreds of photos of Slava and Anya’s art. Those animations were then mapped onto CG versions of Anya and Slava’s porcelain figurines. It is as if they take a magic wand, touch the figurines and Anya’s paintings spring to life. It took a huge number of people, a lot of effort and a lot of artistry to do that. Our incredible team actually hand-drew over 5,000 frames of animation.”

Stefanov and Leontyev would film the backgrounds, perhaps a pile of rubble or the forest floor, and then the three-dimensional computer-generated models of the figurines were inserted into this real-world footage. “Slava’s sculptures become a canvas that the camera is able to fully circle around,” Bellomo marvels. “It appears to be a porcelain figure you can hold in your hand, that you can view from all sides actually existing in their world. Then we animated Anya’s paintings on the figurines, as if the glaze itself was coming alive. As the camera moves around the figurine, different parts of the story unfold. It’s a brilliant combination of Andrey’s cinematography, Slava’s sculpture and Anya’s drawings.”

Leontyev says his jaw dropped when he saw the completed animation. “And when Anya saw how beautifully it was done, with such perfect detail, all she could say was, ‘Finally, finally they are complete.’”

AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

“The fighting continues, not just for Ukraine but for the world too.”

—Slava Leontyev

Throughout his career, Bellomo says he has been attracted to real and fictional narratives about survivors. *Porcelain War* is the story of people facing incredible hardship with grace and courage, people who are, as Leontyev describes himself and his comrades, ordinary people living in extraordinary circumstances. “That was what pulled me in initially,” says Bellomo. “I had never made a documentary before. This is a story that I absolutely had to help tell. Seeing Anya, Slava and Andrey defy their attackers by continuing to live their lives and go on creating art has been absolutely remarkable.”

Asked if he is concerned this film will make him a larger target for the Russians, Leontyev shrugs off the question. “It’s impossible for us to become more of a target for the Russians,” he says. “They are subjecting a never-ending number of those who resist them to torture and death. They do not treat POWs as human beings should. They deliberately destroy those who hold on to their Ukrainian identity. It’s genocide. They have also killed thousands of civilians. They gun down cows on our farms. They don’t kill for a purpose; they kill simply because they have an opportunity to do so. This should not frighten you; it should disgust you. How could it be possible to become a bigger target for them?”

The life he lives now is not his life, he says. Once his time spent in the forest with Anya and their dog Frodo was filled with deciphering animal tracks or finding paths in the tangled forest or a fork in a river or a way to get down the slope of a ravine. Now it is a walk through a literal minefield as they mark the paths they once traveled freely with signs warning others of explosives along the way.

“I built my life so that I could drink tea in the woods all day long and work in the evenings,” he muses. “My life was not really knowing what weapons look like, let alone what to do with them. None of us have chosen to live in an action movie.

“And I hope that is understood in the film,” Leontyev continues. “My normal life was living like a hermit in the heart of a big city, with daily trips out of it to the countryside. My normal social life was with my family and a couple of friends. My normal life was working for myself, not having a boss, never rushing anywhere. It was putting some mind-altering lecture or silly film on in the background, while we worked on our porcelains.”

He is now a man violently pulled in opposite directions, says Bellomo. “He continues to create art. And yet he has to be a soldier. He wants to share with people something beautiful that he’s made. And yet he also has to share with them the knowledge of how to fire a gun, how to kill. He just wants to be in nature, finding inspiration in the beauty of Ukraine. And yet he has to be on the shooting range or on a mission. I’ve never seen somebody so divided.”

Working on the film has been an enormous privilege, Bellomo says. “We’ve become a family. Despite living with terrible tragedies, most people are good, brave and giving. Everyone we see in the film is trying to live their best life and helping each other do the same even in the midst of war. That’s what I learned from knowing them and working with them. I hope that’s what people feel watching the film. You can make a difference, so stay aware and perhaps we can all come together to help our friends in Ukraine.”

For Leontyev, Stasenko and Stefanov, the film is an opportunity to send a universal message, one that transcends the borders they are protecting. “The concept is familiar to anyone who reads fairy tales or fantasy novels or movies about superheroes,” Leontyev says. “Our resistance is a fight between good and evil. This evil has always been waiting for a chance to engulf us. Waiting for a moment of weakness, indifference or indecisiveness. That enemy will use the best things about you against you: your abhorrence of violence, your dislike of confrontations, your desire to avoid escalating it, your very humanity, which makes you look for goodness within them. Whether you’ll rescue yourself and the rest of the world depends on you alone.”

He adds, “I do hope that people will recognize themselves or someone among their family or friends in this film. I hope that they will understand that their future and the future of the world depends on every one of them personally and that the world and the people in it are beautiful and worth fighting for.”

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

BRENDAN BELLOMO (Director, Writer, Editor) was the recipient of a 2009 Student Academy Award® for Live Action Narrative. Beginning his career in visual effects, he supervised the 2012 Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner and Oscar® nominee for Best Picture *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Fox Searchlight). Most recently, Bellomo was the executive producer on the Netflix Original *Chupa*.

Bellomo worked closely with Annie Leibovitz on the global exhibit “Women: New Portraits” and designed the curriculum for the first visual effects course at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, which led him on the path to eventually pair with his directing partner, Slava Leontyev.

SLAVA LEONTYEV (Director, Film Subject) is a first-time director born into a family of biologists in Ukraine. Merging his love of nature and art, Leontyev has spent his life studying painting, photography, graphic design and art theory. Alongside his wife and longtime collaborator Anya Stasenko, Leontyev now creates the porcelain sculptures featured in this film. He is also a former soldier of the Ukrainian Special Forces and a highly regarded weapons instructor for civilians who are currently defending their country against Russian aggression.

ANYA STASENKO (Associate Producer, Film Subject) is a ceramics artist and experienced nature photographer who has been deeply engaged in the fine arts since her early childhood in Kharkiv, Ukraine. As such, Stasenko’s paintings have become her lifelong language. While studying at the Kharkiv School of Arts and Academy of Design and Arts, she developed a unique style of painting on ceramic miniatures. This is also where she began to collaborate with Slava Leontyev, now her husband. Together, they create the widely recognized tiny porcelain figurines featured in this film.

ANDREY STEFANOV (Director of Photography, Film Subject) was born in Feodosia, a town in Crimea, Ukraine, and received his artistic education in Kharkiv. He then returned to his home in Crimea, where he became an artisan winemaker and recognized oil painter. For many years Stefanov created fine art photography, landscape paintings and still lifes. When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Stefanov and his friend Slava Leontyev decided to pick up film cameras, discovering a new medium to express their artistic perspectives. This is Stefanov’s first feature credit as a cinematographer.

ANIELA SIDORSKA (Producer, Writer, Editor) is a Polish-born refugee whose love of film began when she first experienced Western cinema in her early childhood. After studying art in San Francisco, she went on to be a visual effects compositor on *Captain America: The First Avenger*, a compositing supervisor on the 2012 Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner and Oscar nominee for Best Picture *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, and a visual effects producer on such films as Lee Daniels’ *The Butler* and *The Expendables 3*. Her small-screen credits include the series “Boardwalk Empire,” “The Blacklist,” “The Americans” and “Elementary.” Most recently, she was involved in creature development for the Netflix Original *Chupa* and was a co-writer on the feature film, *Extra Ordinary*, now in development.

Upon discovering porcelain artists in Ukraine, Sidorska went on to develop, write and produce this film. She is a voting member of the Producers Guild of America (PGA) and the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

PAULA DUPRÉ PESMEN (Producer, Writer) is an Emmy Award®- and Grammy Award®-winning producer who produced the Oscar-winning feature documentary *The Cove*. In 2010, she was named producer of the year by the PGA. Pesmen launched her film career on the producing teams of such narrative features as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, *Rent*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *Home Alone 2* and *Stepmom*. She produced the renowned documentary features *Chasing Ice* (Emmy winner, Sundance Cinematography Award, SXSW Audience Award), *Keep on Keepin’ On* (Audience Award winner at Tribeca and Palm Springs film festivals) and *Quincy* (Grammy winner). For her philanthropic work, Pesmen was named a “Local Hero” by Oprah Winfrey’s O

magazine.

CAMILLA MAZZAFERRO (Producer) began her career at PWC and RadicalMedia, producing a number of award-winning commercial campaigns, music videos and short films. Most recently she produced feature documentaries *My Sister Liv* (2022 Karlovy Vary and Doc NYC), *A Fire Inside* (2021 Sydney Film Festival), *Machine* (2019 Melbourne International Film Festival) and the Netflix Original *Chef's Table*. Other projects include *Homebodies* (SXSW 2016), *Ian Thorpe: The Swimmer* and *Girls Can't Surf* (2021 Tribeca Film Festival).

OLIVIA AHNEMANN (Producer) has been producing award-winning documentary films for over 20 years. She produced 2020's *Youth v Gov* (Doc NYC, Jackson Wild Grand Teton Award), which was released globally on Netflix; 2018's *The Human Element*, featuring photographer James Balog (San Francisco International Film Festival, SCAD Savannah Film Festival's Best Feature Documentary Award); Stephanie Soechtig's *Under the Gun* (2016 Sundance Film Festival), which was distributed by Epix/Lionsgate; and Louie Psihoyos' *Racing Extinction* (2015 Sundance Film Festival), which was distributed by Discovery.

In 2016 Ahnemann was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award for Exceptional Merit in Documentary Filmmaking. She co-produced the Oscar-winning feature documentary *The Cove*, which garnered over 70 awards globally, including the PGA's Best Documentary award.

PICTUREHOUSE (North American Distributor) is a Los Angeles-based film marketing and distribution company led by CEO Bob Berney and COO Jeanne R. Berney. The company acquires, markets and distributes global content across all platforms. Originally formed in 2005 as a joint venture between Time Warner's HBO Films and New Line Cinema, the Picturehouse brand has a long history of storied excellence.

SONGBIRD STUDIOS (Production Company) is an Australian-born company producing creatively ambitious documentaries that reflect its passion for bringing extraordinary stories to the screen with uncompromising craft and execution.

IMAGINARY LANE (Production Company) is a Los Angeles-based production company with a focus on developing narrative features, as well as feature-length documentaries about ordinary people living extraordinary lives.

###

PORCELAIN WAR

Picturehouse Presents

A Songbird Studios Production

**In Association With
Imaginary Lane**

**In Association With
Bob's Your Uncle**

**In Association With
Far Star Media
The Howard G. Buffett Foundation**

**In Association With
Sobrato Philanthropies
Cayton Goldrich Family Foundation**

**A Film By
Brendan Bellomo & Slava Leontyev**

**Directed by
Brendan Bellomo & Slava Leontyev**

**Written by
Aniela Sidorska
Brendan Bellomo
Paula DuPre' Pesmen
Slava Leontyev**

**Produced by
Aniela Sidorska, p.g.a.
Paula DuPre' Pesmen, p.g.a.
Camilla Mazzaferro
Olivia Ahnemann**

**Executive Producers
Al Hicks
Luke Mazzaferro**

Rob Galluzzo
Linda A. Cornfield
David J. Cornfield
Howard G. Buffett
Sheri Sobrato
Jeffrey Sobrato
Lisa Sobrato Sonsini
Andrea Cayton
Garrett Cayton
Ginny Jordan
Georgia Welles
Amy Carpenter
Steve Carpenter
James Balog
Robina Riccitiello
Josh Peters
Michael Anders
Karl Kister
Joe Barnathan
Kevin Marciano
John Schmidt

Co-Executive Producers

Robin Chesler
Alice Fiori
William Campbell
Marsha Garces Williams

Contributing Producers

Sakurako Fisher
Heather A. Baldry
Steve Balog
Rosalie Balog
Susan Coyle

Cinematography by
Andrey Stefanov

Edited by
Brendan Bellomo
Aniela Sidorska
Kelly Cameron

Associate Producers

Anya Stasenko
Kateryna Lapina

Music by

DakhaBrakha

Animation by

BluBlu Studios

Visual Effects Supervisor

Brendan Bellomo

CG Supervisor

Quade Biddle

Featuring

Slava Leontyev
Anya Stasenko
Andrey Stefanov
Anya Stefanova
Sonya Stefanova
Olena Herasymenko
Frodo

Saigon Unit

Katya
Johnny
Korsar
August
Diver
Printer
Silver
Casper
Varan
Amir
Hermes

This film could not have been made without the generous support of

Five Star Media
The Howard G. Buffett Foundation
Sobrato Philanthropies
Cayton Goldrich Family Foundation
Resonance Philanthropies
Safe Space Pictures
Sakana Foundation
John Caulkins
Matthew Parrott
Emilia Parrott
Andreas Lee
Laura Lee
Jacek Sidorski
Aniela S. Sidorska
David Friedman
Cameron Miranda
Tirzah Firestone
Anton Lenke
Vish Kumar
Stephanie Porter
Matthew Daniels
Tony Borden
Anna Topalhan
Roman Werpachowski
Stephen J. Westfold
Andrew Engert
Sheena Nelson
Nick Tanis
Earth Vision Institute

Additional Camera

Slava Leontyev

GoPro Camera Operators

Katya
Johnny
August
Diver

Korsar
Palvel

Drone Camera Operators

Korsar
Diver
DJ
Printer

Sound Recordist

Andrey Stefanov
Slava Leontyev

Ukraine Logistics & BTS Camera

Victoria Melnik
Igor Melnik
Sergij Dutka

Military Consultant

Matthew Parrott

Drone & GoPro Camera Advisor

Anton Lenke

POST PRODUCTION

Post Production Supervisors

Camilla Mazzaferro
Luke Mazzaferro
Aniela Sidorska

Post Production Coordinator

Casey Ventura

Additional Editing

Scott Walmsley

Music Editor

Tim Starnes

Assistant Editors

Harry Learoyd

Daniel O'Brien
Liam Riley
Poorani Rajkumar
Sarah Hatzon
Jarrod Young
Mandi Mesnekoff

Interpreter
Kateryna Lapina

Translation Advisors
Dale Pesmen
Mikhail Mokeyev
Michael Wasserman

Translators
Marta Hebrian
Elena Mikhailik
Bjorn Winters
Vladimir Tretyakov
Olena Radievska
Olena Kariuk

Subtitling Services
SBS in Language
Caption Easy

Post Production IT
Rob Weekhout
Chay MacTavish
Sagar Kandel

Post Production Assistants
Sunday Jones-Evans
Max Wild

Archival Producer
Susan Johnson

Fact Checking
Avocados Are Fruit, LLC
Cali Bagby

Rich Denmark
Noel Engels
Amy Herdy
Jim Moscou

Additional Fact Checking

Curt Pesmin

Impact Coordinator

Bennet Berlin

ANIMATION BY BLUBLU STUDIOS

Executive Producer

Gabriela Jabłońska

Assisting Producer

Mateusz Stelmaszczyk

Producer and Strategic Supervisor

Jarek Nowak

Jakub Kurek

Executive Creative Director

Jędrzej Skrzypczyk

Art Director and Lead Illustrator

Ewa Baran

Jagoda Kłaczyńska

Illustrator

Bartek Zaborski

Lead Animator and Compositing (3D)

Michał Machowina

Lead Animator (2D)

Jagoda Kaleta

Animation and Clean Up

Jagoda Kaleta

Karolina Specht

Tomasz Wyrąbkiewicz
Jakub Kanarek

Color

Jagoda Kaleta
Karolina Specht
Tomasz Wyrąbkiewicz
Bartosz Dłużewski
Zuzanna Tomasiak
Jakub Kanarek

Finance Department

Małgorzata Matejko-Kurek
Jakub Kurek

Agent/Producer

Liz Shaw

BluBlu Studios Represented by Liz Laine Reps, Inc.

VISUAL EFFECTS BY VISRO MEDIA

Executive Producer

Vishishth Kumar

Digital Producer

Saumya Sharma

Digital Coordinator

Hari Prasad PHR

Digital Artists

Aravind Mani
Gunasekaran Balasundaram
Sandhiya Sekar
Srinath Ettian
Sutharsanan Karthigaivel
Ajai Ramamoorthi
Srinivasan Arul
Suriya Pazhani
Suriya Selvam
Yuvarani Velou

Muthulakshmi Pandurangan
Ellamparuthi Pzhanisamy
Karthik Vasu
Dhamodaran Govindharaj
Bhakiaraj Soundharajan
Aditya Thenraj
Pramod Basavaraju
Rajesh Sundar
Kishore Nanjundappa
Abishek Adiraju
Sagar Reddy
Prasanna Hegde
Sripavan Siddabattula
Satyajit Raul
Soumitra Bisai

VISUAL EFFECTS BY LIGHT SAIL VR

3D Artist

Mike Hodgetts

Tracking and Match-Moving

Alex Pearce

COLOR BY CRAYON

Colorist

Kali Bateman

Color Executive Producer

Bridget O'Shea

Color Producers

Isabelle Amie

Meg Doyle

FILM GRAIN EMULATION BY INVIZIGRAIN

DCP MASTERING BY POST LAB IO

SOUND BY RMS

Co-Supervising Sound Editor

Robert Mackenzie

Re-Recording Mixer

Sam Hayward

Co-Supervising Sound Editor & Dialogue Supervisor

Jared Dwyer

Sound Designer & Sound Effects Editor

Andrew Miller

Joe Mount

Alex Francis

Foley Artist

Adrian Medhurst

Foley Recorder

Duncan Campbell

Ukraine Foley Mixer

Karina Rezhevskaya

Ukraine Foley Artist

Diana Oleksiiko

Ukraine Foley Editor

Pavlo Nivievskyi

1st Sound Assistant

Matt Lee

Sound Assistant

Sean Walker

RMS Producer

Monica Anderson

MUSIC BY DAKHABRAKHA

Musicians

Nina Garenetska
Marko Halanevych
Iryna Kovalenko
Olena Tsubulska

Director and Founder

Vladyslav Troitskyi

Artist Manager

Iryna Gorban

Additional Music Arrangement by

Tim Starnes

Written and Performed by DakhaBrakha. ©DakhaBrakha

"Vesna"
"Sonnet"
"Zainka"
"Monakh"
"Vanyusha"
"Vesnyanky"
"Dibrova"
"Baby"
"Yahudky"
"Oi Za Lisochkom"
"Oy, U Kyevi"
"Oi Upav Snizhok"
"Vesnyanky"
"Alambari"
"Oy Ishov Chumak"
"Vesna Chilli"
"Nad Dunaem"
"Please Don't Cry"
"Kolyskova"

"Oi Upav Snizhok" Additional Composers Belarus Trio Port Mone

UKRAINE MUSIC PERFORMANCES

**DakhaBrakha Ukraine Concerts Filmed By
SkyDiveFilm Production**

Director and Co-Producer "DakhaBrakha: On the Road"

Anna Korzh

Directors of Photography

Denys Melnyk

Vadym Ilkov

Camera

Misha Lybarsky

Anton Borysiuk

Viktoriya Belyavska

Sound Designer

Andrii Nidzelskyi

“Vesna” Written and Performed By

DakhaBrakha

“VESNA” BY DAKHABRAKHA

Courtesy of

KEXP

Recorded for

Live On KEXP April 23 2017 in Seattle

Audio Engineer and Mixer

Kevin Suggs

Mastering Engineer

Matt Ogaz

ARCHIVAL

Getty

Pond5

AP Archive

S-Footage

Serhii Taranenko

Production Counsel Australia

Simpsons Solicitors

Mark Bamford

Lee Elsdon

Production Counsel U.S.
Granderson Des Rochers LLP
Biana Grimshaw, Esq.
Becca Theodore

Legal Counsel
W. Wilder Knight II, of Pryor Cashman LLP

SONGBIRD STUDIOS

Chief Financial Officer
Rebecca Day

Financial Controller
Elysse Welk

Executive Assistant to Rob Galluzzo
Kate Feather

Production Coordinator
Adelaide Helena

FINCH
Managing Director & Executive Producer
Corey Esse

Post Production Executive Producer
Amelia Bromley

Production Assistants
Lily Rodgers
Alana Carling

SALES REPRESENTATION

Submarine Entertainment Sales
Josh Braun
Dan Braun
Ben Braun
Matt Burke

Ben Schwartz
Joe Tufano
Olivia Cook
Val Dowd

SALES LEGAL

Frankfurt Kurnit Klein & Selz
Scott Goldman
Larissa Calva Ruiz
Hayden Goldblatt

PUBLICITY BY

Acme PR
Nancy Willen
Emily McDonald
Maguire Mount
Jayne Goldsmith

FISCAL SPONSOR

Fiscal Sponsor
Utah Film Center

Executive Director
Mariah Mellus

Finance Director
John Kirsling

Fiscal Sponsorship Manager & Artist Liaison
Frank Bennett

THE FILMMAKERS WISH TO THANK

Aniela S. Sidorska
Jacek Sidorski
Emilia Parrott
Matthew Parrott
Oliver Parrott
Harper Parrott

Jerzy "Habdank" Stefanowski
Jozefa "Poranek" Stefanowska-Rybus
Curt Pesmen
Jesse Pesmen
Josh Pesmen
Laura and Donk Scott
Jeannie Ward
Iya Labunka
Michael Ahnemann
Chloe Ahnemann
Rosemarie Mazzaferro
Angelo Mazzaferro
Herbie Mazzaferro
Odetta Mazzaferro
Jocelyn Dehnert
Robert Dehnert
Alexis Acevedo
Dimitris Paparizos
Victor Leontyev
Frida Leontyeva
Sai Seigel
Suzanne Balog
Shannon Looney
Polina Buchak, Razom Cinema
Floyd
Razom for Ukraine
Frodo thanks his veterinarians, especially Dmytro Morozenko

Very Special Thanks

Saigon Unit
Katya
Johnny
Korsar
August
Diver
Printer
Silver
Casper
Varan
Amir
Hermes
Rybak

Den
DJ
Willis
Ukrainian Military
Levsha
Anita Luis
Andrij Palval
Captain Igor Sergeev
Captain Mykyta Horskyi
Lieutenant Evgenij "KMS" Miroshnichenko
Maidan Monitoring Information Center

Special Thanks

Marsha Beyer
Jakub Bielicki
Jane Butcher
Dawson Campbell
Spencer Campbell
Kevin Cunningham
D and Ch
Antonio D'Intino
Iryna Dovhan
Rob Embrey
Ali Fujino
Melissa Grumhaus
Preston Harvey
Aaron Jacobs
Łukasz Jarczewski
Trey Lyons
Sarah Marikar
Greg McRae
Rob Morgan
Abram Nalibotsky
Jeff Nelson
Taylor Nettnin
Jeff Orlowski-Yang
Alla Ozhoha-Maslovska
Greg Pedicin
Matthew Polis
Larrisa Rhodes
Sonke Roth
Eric Singer

Justin Smith B.
Jeff Streeper
Michael Toji
Joe Wang
Abby Yawitz
Nataliya Zubar
Mark Zwonitzer

Coupe Studios Music + Sound Design
Monkeyland Audio, Inc.
SoundSpace
Office of U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper
U.S. Embassy in Ukraine
Oksana Markarova, Ambassador of Ukraine to the United States

This film is in honor of Oleksandr "Flint" Dyakiv and all those who have died fighting for the
freedom of Ukraine.