

CANNES 2025 Quinzaine des Cinéastes

Critique : *Militantropos*

par [SAVINA PETKOVA](#)

21/05/2025 - CANNES 2025 : Le documentaire ukrainien de Yelizaveta Smith, Alina Gorlova et Simon Mozgovyi observe, et enquête sur les implications psychologiques de la vie en temps de guerre



Cet article est disponible en anglais.

One of the few documentaries in this year's [Cannes Directors' Fortnight](#), *Militantropos* is an unflinching attempt to make social and psychological sense of how humans – in this case, Ukrainians – learn to live in wartime. *Militantropos*, its name a conjoining of ancient etymologies, emerges as a product of the years-long collective endeavour of co-directors **Yelizaveta Smith**, **Alina Gorlova** and **Simon Mozgovyi**. The film opens with a shot of a leaden sky, clouds, smoke and ash, painting a picture of continuous desolation, while fire crackles in the distance and the sound of explosions morphs into a droning noise.

A title card tells us, "Militantropos is a persona adopted by humans when entering a state of war." On the one

hand, the mixing of Latin and Ancient Greek here frames this lived experience as a tale as old as time itself, but on the other hand, the primary meaning of “persona” in Latin refers to the mask worn by theatre actors in character. That’s not to say that the film suggests or resorts to artificiality for its formal endeavours. Quite the opposite: there are a few intertitles that explain different aspects of what “militantropos” is, and while they may all be worded in a philosophical way, the images they bring forth are uncompromising and raw. Smith, Gorlova and Mozgovyi are presenting a kind of typological analysis of what living in war does to a person, but one which never gets too abstract. “War fractures militantropos” or “militantropos chooses to accept war” are two examples of such guiding sentences that linger on the black screen, separating sequences from one another.

One can only suspect that making this directly observational film through such a psychological lens could have had a soothing effect on the makers. Between them, their respective previous works have been rewarded at festivals such as the Berlinale and DOK Leipzig, and their shared hopeful approach to exploring the consequences of war and trauma grounds the film in a lived reality, while providing just enough distance (through the intertitles) to allow hope to seep through.

Such a project is bound to be a portrait of multitudes (or a multitudinous portrait, if you’d prefer), where static takes allow for faces, voices and stories to take their rightful places. Sonically embedded are the rumbling sounds of enemy attacks, followed by the resounding silence of the ruins, and in combination with the images, these soundscapes bring out the otherwise concealed softness of what’s on screen. Occasionally, the camera is so static that the frame resembles a still life.

Every psychoanalysis of the social has to account for the latter’s fractured state, and *Militantropos* serves as a great example of this: a cinematic attempt to make sense of death, suffering and war, while also facing all of them at once. It’s a seemingly impossible task, yet as the film shows us, it’s not for the Ukrainian people.

Militantropos was produced by [Tabor](#) (Ukraine) in co-production with [Mischief Films](#) (Austria) and [Les Valseurs Bordeaux](#) (France). [Square Eyes](#) handles the film’s word sales.

(Traduit de l'anglais)

plus sur : Militantropos



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titre international : Militantropos

titre original : Militantropos

pays : [Ukraine, Autriche, France](#)

vente à l'étranger : [Square Eyes](#)

année : [2025](#)

réalisation : [Yelizaveta Smith, Alina Gorlova, Simon Mozgovyi](#)

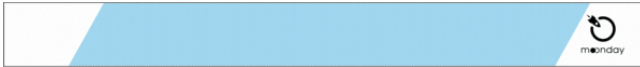


scénario :

Yelizaveta Smith, Alina
Gorlova, Simon Mozgovyi,
Maksym Nakonechnyi

prix/sélections spéciaux

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