




A FILM BY
DEJAN PETROVIĆ

ADJUSTING

Filmart 

 Cinnamon
FILMS



Republic of Serbia
Ministry of Culture and Media



ADJUSTING

SHORT DOCUMENTARY

written, directed and produced by Dejan Petrović
19 minutes | Serbia | 2021

HD | 2.35:1 | color | stereo
Serbian with English subtitles

INDEPENDENT FILM CENTRE FILMART
in co-production with CINNAMON FILMS
with the support of FILM CENTER SERBIA,
MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA



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SYNOPSIS

A unique shelter for dogs in Europe, it is a place where animal controllers bring stray dogs impounded daily on the outskirts of the city. Showing the process of training these dogs, the film *Adjusting*, itself a metaphor, deals with a current social issue – the subjugation of the individual to the will of authority. Establishing a parallel between dog shelters and societies, the film re-examines the hierarchies of power, as well as the relativity of any authority that renders us obedient through the exercise of reward and punishment.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It was in the period between 2015 and 2019, when my wife and I came under attack from local politicians in power and were declared 'undesirables' in our town, that I realised how strongly human nature is marked by conformism. I realised how easily we tend to adapt to and uncritically accept the opinion of the leader, the person in power, the authority we *depend on* – all for the sake of personal, usually petty material interests.

Along with our attempted degradation by representatives of the local government, people we had trusted as our friends up until that moment, suddenly started to avoid us, crossing to the other side of the street, hiding behind supermarket shelves, or not answering phone calls. In some, we could recognize the feeling of shame, but also the instinctive need for security, the fear of losing their job, or being *rejected* for opposing the views of the *authorities*.

At about that time, I started filming the documentary **The Same**, in several of the largest prisons in Serbia, trying to understand why, under the influence of the system, we give up on ourselves, our desires, needs, individuality – and, in the end, freedom.

At an internal screening of the film at the Sremska Mitrovica prison, I learned something that additionally motivated me to pursue my research of the topic and present it from a different angle. Namely, I learned from the warden that this is one of the three prisons in Europe where the programme of resocialisation of convicts through dog training is implemented, and the only one in Europe which contains a dog shelter within the prison itself. After training to work with dogs and obtaining a work licence, the convicts take care of the dogs' nutrition and hygiene, but also, through the training they give them, help to *adjust* and *prepare* them for their return to the street.

Dog training by convicts in a dog shelter inside the prison seemed to me to be a good metaphor for presenting a current social issue that leads us to ask ourselves: Who are the authorities whose will we conform and adjust to, and why do we uncritically accept the values they impose on us?

We tend to conform because we are under the influence of different *systems* and *authorities* from

earliest childhood, from parents, teachers, bosses and leaders to other agencies who *adjust* us through the exercise of reward and punishment, teaching us what behaviour is acceptable in order that we become good persons. We feel good when we are rewarded, and, as if automatically, we continue to do and say what others expect us to. We meet the expectations of others and become exactly as they are – and as we, according to their expectations, should be. We become automatons, living in the delusion that we are individuals who possess their own will and freedom.

Adjusting is an observational documentary about submission to the will of others, the relativity of any authority, reward and punishment, rejection and acceptance, and about empathy and friendship between two beings – an animal and a human who both come from the margins and share a similar destiny.

Dejan Petrović



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Dejan Petrović has written screenplays and directed several short feature and documentary films. As a producer, he has taken part in the production of about 50 short documentaries. He is a founder and general manager of the Independent Film Centre *Filmart* which carries out several projects such as International Student Film Camp *Interaction*, among others. He works as a professor at the department of Film and TV directing at the Academy of Arts in Belgrade. Also, he is a member of *DokSerbia* – the Association of Documentary Filmmakers of Serbia. His film *The Same* has been shown at festivals around the world (*IDFA, Doc Edge, ZagrebDox...*) and has collected more than 15 awards.

PRODUCTION COMPANY PROFILE - FILMART

Since its founding in 2005, the Independent Film Centre *Filmart* has, through the realisation of its projects, come to specialise in the development of documentary film, film education, the encouragement of youth filmmaking, film promotion, as well as research in the field of visual arts.

Filmart organises, among other things, the International Student Film Camp *Interaction*, the International Masterclass of Documentary Film *Interdoc*, the *IVA.Lab* and the *Photodocuments*.

Under the auspices of *Filmart*, more than 50 projects in the field of film and visual arts have been made to date, including 53 short documentaries, 2 short feature films, 9 video works, as well as numerous documentary television shows and web series.

The authors, whose films were made in the production of *Filmart*, have won more than 40 different awards at film festivals in the country and abroad.

CREDITS

Filmart 

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WITH THE SUPPORT OF

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