

BROKEN LAND



A documentary by Stéphanie Barbey et Luc Peter
With the artistic collaboration of Peter Mettler

Switzerland 2014, 75 min.

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“it's not paranoia, it's just a way of life.”

Out in desert-like nature, living in the shadows of the immense fence that is erected to control Mexican immigration, seven Americans tell how the border transforms their lives. They observe the haunting traces left by the crossing migrants – people they never come face to face with – as they confide their fear, defiance and at times even compassion.

synopsis

Somewhere in this deserted landscape along the enormous border, which separates the United States from Mexico, a small community of Americans lives their daily lives in the shadow of the fence, erected to protect them from clandestine immigration.

They all monitor the traces left by the crossing migrants. Stirring shadows on surveillance cameras, skeletal remains fading in the sun or mere footprints in the sand: the ghostly presence of those who are simply passing through becomes an obsession for some of the residents.

Each in their own way is affected by this immense scar, which scores the horizon, and has become a breeding ground for myths and fantasies. Some barricade themselves off behind a multitude of surveillance gadgets, dominated by a fear of the unknown. Others feel the need to actively defend their territory, finding a purpose to their often solitary lives. Others, outraged by the continuous monitoring of the border and the intrusion into their privacy, try to help migrants in need.

Endearing and complex, they disclose their anguish, at the forefront of a society that is closing itself off.

directors statement

What becomes of a democracy that builds walls to protect itself from immigration? A feared immigration upon which the country was originally built... What consequences does this approach have for those who are supposedly being protected? How does this affect their behavior and perception of each other?

Through the eyes of a handful of U.S. citizens living at the foot of the fence that separates them from Mexico, a bigger picture of how our societies define identity and question our future is revealed.

By placing our camera on the desirable side of the border, we explore the real, as well as imaginary effects of this supposed protection, which has ultimately become a confinement. By separating oneself from the "other", by losing real contact with that "other", the sense of fear is reinforced, leading to increasingly irrational and absurd behavior.

Broken Land is a film about paranoia, fear and confinement. A metaphor, as much visual, as political, of the reaction of our planet's largest democracies, when faced with the global phenomenon of migration - be it in the United States, or in Europe. Far from a journalistic investigation, this film proposes a philosophical wandering, an invitation to explore one's own relationship with migration. **Broken Land** is a film that dares to ask the question: what if this desert microcosm was an indicator of our own future ?

protagonists

Richard Hodges

The man with the cameras. A life of paranoia, weapons and confinement. He tries to play down his fear: "It's not paranoia, it's just, kind of, a way of life."

Zack Taylor

Former border police officer, he is security-obsessed. He despises Washington's ambiguous stance towards the border, which he considers to be completely permeable. "A real secure border? It's when people do not even try to come across...".

John Ladd

Owner of a ranch along the border, which has been in his family for five generations, he is tired of the deteriorating situation. He fondly remembers a time when people enjoyed living on the border and crossing over to the other side was a daily occurrence. "We crossed all the time. Helped each other round up cows. Go up to the mountain. Go to restaurants. Go across the line to drink, party. No more ... because of the wall. "

Robin and John Warren

Old hippies, activists who firmly oppose the militarization of the border. They condemn the constant presence of the border patrol and see it as a regression to a Leviathan state. They are libertarians, who frown upon what their government gets away with, in the name of national security. "This war is not a war at the border, it's a war on us. "

Stony and Roadrunner

Old Vietnam veterans, they now form part of the movement of the so-called Minutemen, a group of private militias, who voluntarily monitor the border. Now retired, they make use of their military training, pursuing migrants, while armed to their teeth.

Glenn Spencer

Patriot to the extreme, advocate for protecting the U.S. border: "We are the last hope in the universe." He uses his private plane to survey and film the migrants crossing the border, denouncing the "invasion" to local border patrol. He lives alone with his seven German shepherds.

Bruce Anderson

A forensic doctor and anthropologist, he works at the morgue, identifying the John Does and Jane Does found in the desert - the unknown, unidentified bodies.

The « Others »

And then of course there are those others, the ones we never see, those who cross the border and who silently are a part of the film. With their ghostly presence, they are not only invading the physical territory, but also – and most noticeably - the imagination of the Americans. The more elusive or invisible they are, the more frightening they become.

The border

The border as the end of the world; the ultimate barricade out in the middle of nowhere. An arbitrary line in the sand, created by a huge country that fearfully hides behind a wall. The border, in all its cinematic beauty - brutal, arid and dramatic – in the shadow of which a group of individuals live, who feel abandoned by the rest of the country and their government. Feeling secluded, they are haunted by the disturbing presence of those who cross the border, those who pose a threat to them...

directors

Stéphanie Barbey

After studying international relations, Stéphanie Barbey worked for several years in development and journalism. Then she took a training in documentary filmmaking at Ateliers Varan in Paris, before coming back in Geneva where she has been directing and working on several movies.

FILMOGRAPHY (selection)

- 2014 BROKEN LAND, documentary, 75 min. co-directed with Luc Peter
- 2012 PASSE-MOI LES JUMELLES, LE SAVOIR-FER, documentary, 26 min.
co-directed with Luc Peter
- 2010 CONSTRUIRE LA SUISSE, documentary, 12 min
- 2009 PORTRAIT D'UN MARECHAL-FERRANT, documentary, 12 min.
- 2008 SCIENCE SUISSE, PORTRAIT DE BERNARD HIRSCHHEL, documentary, 12 min.
- 2007 MAGIC RADIO, documentary 54 and 83 min. co-directed with Luc Peter

Luc Peter

Luc Peter has been directing and producing documentaries since 1995. Camera operator on most of his films, Luc Peter is also director of photography for other directors, among others, ON DIRAIT LE SUD by Vincent Pluss (Swiss Film Prize Award 2003). Since 2001, he is associate producer at Intermezzo Films.

FILMOGRAPHY (selection)

- 2014 BROKEN LAND, documentary, 75 min. co-directed with Stéphanie Barbey
- 2010 LES ANNEES SCHWARZENBACH, documentary, 54 min.
- 2007 MAGIC RADIO, documentary 54 and 83 min. co-directed with Stéphanie Barbey
- 2004 LA RIBOT DISTINGUIDA, documentary, 63 min.
- 2002 GILLES JOBIN : LE VOYAGE DE MOEBIUS, documentary, 53 min.
- 2000 RECORD PLAYER / CHRISTIAN MARCLAY, documentary, 42 min.
- 2000 A L'EST DES REVES, documentary, 52 min.

With the artistic collaboration of Peter Mettler

Born in 1958 in Toronto, Canada. Joint Swiss and Canadian citizenship. 1977-82 Attends Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in Toronto, film and photography studies. Lives and works in Switzerland and Canada as filmmaker, musician and photographer.

FILMOGRAPHY (selection)

- 2012 THE END OF TIME, documentary, 114 min.
- 2009 PETROPOLIS-AERIAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE ALBERTA TAR SANDS, experimental, 40 min.
- 2002 GAMBLING, GODS AND LSD, documentary, 180 min.

technical sheet

Directed by	Stéphanie Barbey and Luc Peter With the artistic collaboration of Peter Mettler
Image	Peter Mettler / Luc Peter
Sound	Jürg Lempen
Music	Franz Treichler
Editing	Florent Mangeot / Peter Mettler / Vincent Pluss
Sound editing and re-recording mix	Etienne Curchod
Production	Intermezzo Films, Geneva Aline Schmid
Coproduction	RTS Radio Télévision Suisse SRG SSR ARTE G.E.I.E
Genre	Documentary
Duration	75 min
Original title	Broken Land
Original language	Anglais Sous-titrage Français et Allemand
Festivals	Semaine de la critique – Festival del film Locarno Screenings : Thursday, August 14, 11 a.m. at Kursaal Friday, August 15, 6.30 p.m. at L'Altra Sala