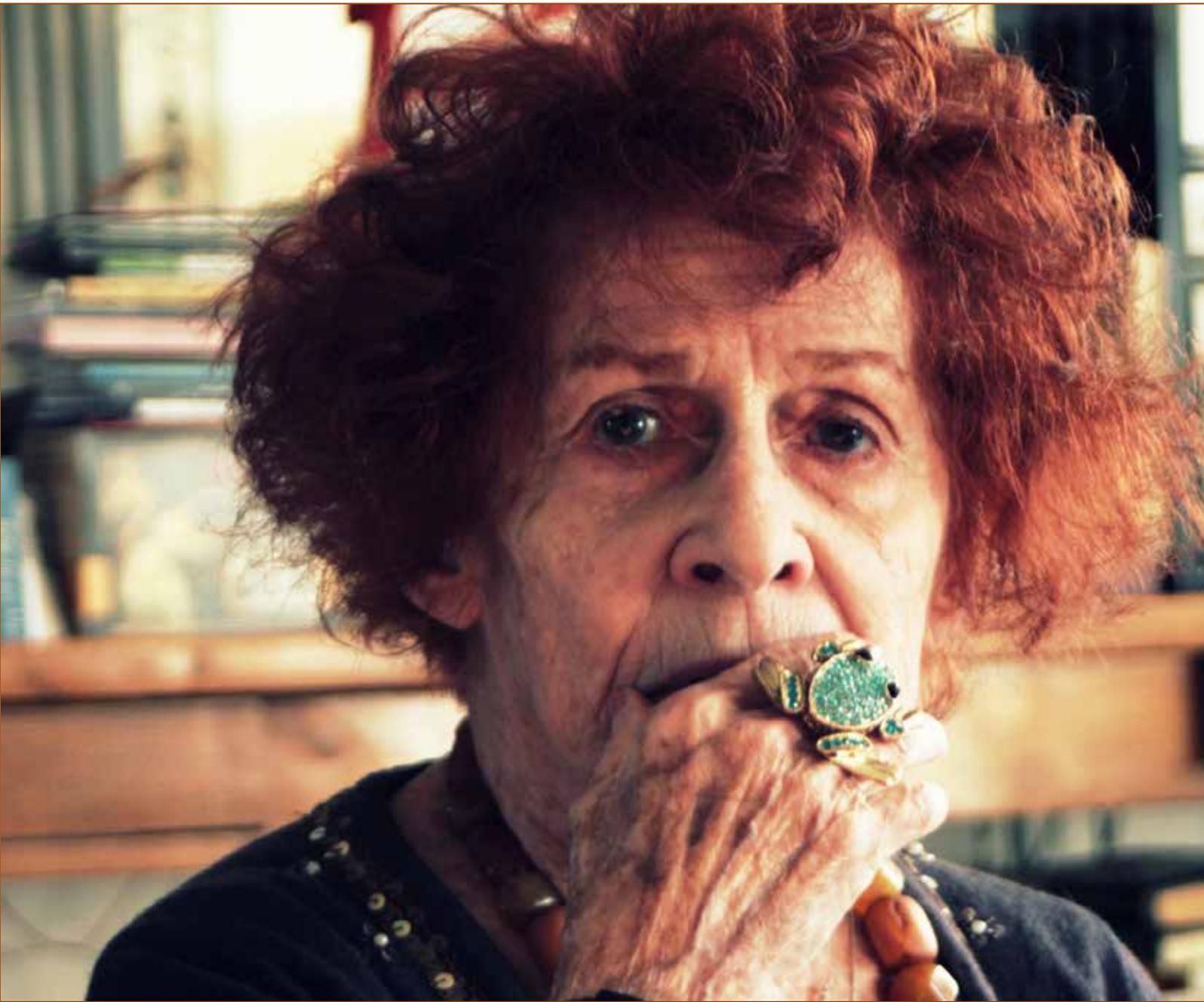


# MARCELINE



A film by Cordelia Dvorák

*„I’m a revolted anyway!”*



## Logline

*MARCELINE* is an encounter with the remarkable French film director, author, producer and actress Marceline Loridan-Ivens: the radical chronicler, filmmaker, Holocaust survivor, and long-standing companion of the legendary film pioneer Joris Ivens.

*MARCELINE* is also a film about a unique love and partnership in film making, about surviving the Holocaust by film-making and about an unimpeachable witness of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



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## Synopsis

"*Une vieille dame intranquille*" - a restive old lady - Marceline is being called today. And she is proud of her reputation: at almost 90 years old she is still radical and emphatically unadjusted.

She was only 15 when both, she and her father, a Polish Jew from Łódź who had settled in France in the twenties, were deported in 1944. She to Birkenau, he to Auschwitz.

She survived. He didn't. When she learned about his death, she stopped growing.

70 years later, the shock of the terrorist attacks in France made her taking a radical decision: as now a 85-year-old, she responded to the last sign of life from her father, - a little note, secretly passed on to her in the camp, - in a very intimate, self-critical life-confession. **This fictional letter** (*Et tu n'es pas revenue*, GRASSET, Paris 2015), - Marceline's view back on the biggest controversies of the 20th century, - is the unsentimental account of a Holocaust survivor **who went on to become one of the politically most uncompromising film directors.**

While her friends were still debating in Parisian rive-gauche Cafés about France's participation in the Algerian war, she procured a camera and, in 1962, shot her first film on the streets of Algir (*Algérie, année zero*), already committed to her life theme: independence, revolution and emancipation.

Some years later, she accompanied Dutch film revolutionist Joris Ivens, her second husband, with the film camera to the front in Vietnam (*Le ciel, la terre*, 1965; *Loin du Vietnam*, 1967; *La 17e parallèle*, 1968; *Recontre avec le President Ho Chi Minh*, 1969), to the independence struggle in Indochina (*Le peuple et ses fusils*, 1969) and in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, to China (*Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes*, 1972-75). **Only in her own political exposure she seems to have found a valid justification of her existence as a survivor.**

After Ivens' death in 1989, she started working on a very personal project, her autobiographical feature film (*The Birch-Tree Meadow*, 2003), - **the first fiction film ever permitted to be shot on location in Auschwitz-Birkenau.** It is a courageous look back on her deportation and her return to life "afterwards" that she specifically dedicated to **the female survivors** of the concentration camps. Ever since she shot *Le 17-ième parallèle* (1968), a documentary about the female resilience during the Vietnam War, she has been perceived as a strong spokesperson also for the cause of women.

Currently she is writing a new book, a kind of "Female Manifesto" and "Ode to life", she call's it, dedicated to love and the female body.

**Indeed a vibrant affirmation of life - at the age of almost 90!**

Now is the (last) moment to capture Marceline Loridan-Ivens and her remarkable life: the broad arc spanning from the Holocaust survivor to the political activist and combatively critical filmmaker.

## The Film



*„My dream was a dream of freedom!  
Sometimes I had to pay very dear for it,  
because I was always in opposition.”*

The dramaturgy of the film will follow **three different narrative strings** and Marceline herself will lead us through the film.

### I. The present

Today Marceline Loridan-Ivens is 89 years old. We experience her as a small, delicate, sometimes very furious, but also extremely charming and humorous old lady with very red hair and extravagant clothes.

**The film starts in her sunny apartment** above the roofs of Paris in St. Germain des Prés where she moved in sixty years ago together with the Dutch

filmmaker Joris Ivens. It is the only apartment where the lifelong revolutionary Ivens ever settled and shared with Marceline, his fourth wife, a kind of "domestic life". Here they spent thirty years together. Several times, the apartment was mortgaged to finance one of their always extremely engaged film-adventures. After Iven's death, Marceline has been living here alone for now nearly another thirty years.

We witness her measured everyday life of today. Her eyesight having become limited, she rarely goes out any more. Her telephone and doorbell keep ringing constantly, though, and friends of all ages call or stop by. We see her with her sister Jacqueline, the only other survivor of the family, **doing the accounting for her still working production company, Capi-Films.**



We accompany her **to the weekly Sabbath dinner** with Jewish intellectuals and some of the last very few Holocaust survivors in

France. A prominent Jewish accomplice will be introduced: **Simone Veil**, a lawyer, activist and important French politician, also a former deportee to Birkenau. Her *"contradictory twin sister"* Marceline calls her: Despite their lifelong political discussions they have always been very much attached to one another, and when Veil died in July 2017 Marceline was in all the news in the front rows, right next to the family Veil, to give her accomplice the last escort at her state funeral.

We will also witness the development of Marceline's new book in **work sessions with French journalist Judith Perrignon**: The disarmingly honest gaze of an almost 90-year-old **on love and partnership, and what she wants to pass on from her experiences to the next generation.**

The creation process of Marceline's new book will always bring Marceline's gaze (and so the narration of the film) **into the present: The summing up of an impressive life between many fronts.**

## II. Marceline's own filmic genesis



In a second narrative string the film will follow Marceline's genesis as a filmmaker: her very first experiences in Jean Rouch's film: *Chronicle of a Summer*, which she will discuss with Jean-Pierre Sergent, her first love. Both were important protagonists of this classic of *Cinema-Verité*. Their friendship continues to this day.

Along excerpts of their most important films, Marceline will give us a very personal and "exclusive" insight into her more than 30 year-long collaboration with Joris Ivens: How did they live, love and complement each another? How convey their political beliefs?

"If we did not agree, we would always shoot two versions and only decide in the editing-room who was right," Marceline explains one of their proven strategies in the filmic collaboration. While Joris focused more on the composition and the image, and often led the camera, Marceline took care of the sound and the selection and interviewing of the protagonists; but the script and the editing was always a common task.



The excerpts from their films will also show the unerring consistency with which they pursued their political commitment, but also moments where they presented different political views. So Marceline still does not understand why she could never persuade Ivens to quit the Communist Party, while she left the CP in the 50s, a few months after she had joined it.

## III. The intimate life-confession

Excerpts from the letter to her father, read by Marceline in off, - as her own, self-critical introspection towards her life - will create the **third narrative line**: the intimate, extremely honest inner dialogue between the daughter and the lifelong shadow of her absent father: a kind of sublime, but intriguing "**pulse**" throughout the whole film, which will connect the different chapters, provide the necessary breaks and fermatas and give the film its breath and rhythm. This inner dialogue will also place the film where Marceline, - so one of the film's hypotheses, - **has found her will and strength to survive**, and probably also the motivation for her exposed cinematic engagement: a kind of **life-long commitment to "atone"** for her own surviving her father's death. Visually, these passages will be translated into "black-screen", **while the insistent voice of the 90-year-old "daughter" continually turns to the father, and so to us, the audience.**

The three narrative strings of the film will follow a **multi-layered** and rather more "**polyphonic**", than **linear-chronological dramaturgy**.

Marceline will be shown in all her contradictoriness, - her delicacy as well as her vehemence. The other protagonist's will always be introduced scenically, in direct interaction with her.

## Visual language



In order not to compete with the visual strength and power of Ivens' camera the film pursues a personal, intimate visual language which will also be focusing on the strength of Marceline's face and the impressive presence of her mimic expression in the interview sequences with her.

Slow camera movements and long close-ups - with Marceline's voice in off - are complemented by precise stills in Marceline's apartment: a cosmos *en miniature* between French bourgeoisie and cosmopolitan unconventionality, extravagant femininity and the rag bag of an old woman, Asian reminiscences from her many trips to the Far East and an international production office and film archive as meticulously ordered as ever.



With concentration in an intimate abstraction in the visual language the film will try to find an appropriate contrast to the powerful, always historically charged material from Iven's and Marceline's documentaries.

Through additional, unpublished material of her shooting all over the world and Marceline's very personal comments on it, the film will gain great emotionality and authenticity and also provide surprising, completely new perspectives on one of the most important film pioneers of the 20th century, Joris Ivens.



The blend of intriguing archive material from the film archives in China and Vietnam, Paris and the Joris-Ivens archive in the Netherlands, complemented by Marceline's retrospection will help us to understand the complexity of the life story of this extraordinary personality.

## Director's note

Throughout my career as a filmmaker I always had a special fascination and sensibility for biographies, and people's retrospective and Jewish topics. My first film (*One has only to survive*, 1999) was about the over 90-year-old Jewish composer and musician Berthold Goldschmidt, who had survived a twofold exile in London: once by the Nazis, then by the militant position of the atonal post-war musical culture. Parallel to the emergence of my film, Goldschmidt experienced a late, but striking international success, which the film was able to capture.

In my most recent film I portrayed the almost 90-year-old famous English art critic, political essayist, novelist, painter and motorcyclist John Berger (*John Berger or the art of looking*, 2016).

When I accidentally came across Marceline's photos in a newspaper two years ago, I was immediately captivated by her gaze and the seemingly vigorous agelessness, her humor, her extravagance, her femininity. I immediately bought her book – the fictional letter to her father (*And you did not come back*) and already during the reading saw a film with her before my inner eye. Since this first strong impact, I've visited Marceline several times in Paris.

Together with producer Eva Rink we were fortunate to immediately succeed in creating a wonderful female complicity and to win Marceline's confidence.



What really makes Marceline an outstanding film protagonist for me is **the arc from the long-silenced survivor of the Holocaust she was, when returning back to France confronted with an oppressive silence everywhere to one of the politically most uncompromising and frank European film makers.** "I wanted to become part of a story that was greater than my own," she writes to her father; and: "Because I could not do anything for myself, I had to do something for all the others."

Having vehemently rebelled against her Jewish family background for decades, cast aside her Jewish name and married two non-Jews – today, in a France that is divided by terror and growing radicalism, she becomes once again painfully aware of her Judaism and takes a critical look back at

her dreams and political commitment: "The more I demanded [...] reparation, the more I had the impression to have found my place. I thought that with the liberation of the masses – be they Algerian, Vietnamese, or Chinese – the Jewish problem would be solved by itself. That was a terrible mistake."

The story of this unusual woman can indeed be told **along the great, political and ideological breaks of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.** She found her voice and identity in filmmaking and dedicated her whole life to a critical and engaged cinema. All her films were and still are unique historical documents that even today have not lost any of their intensity. **The material of her films and her life itself is inherently great cinema.** Unbelievably enough, however, to this very day there has not been a film made about her that would have told her astounding life.

It is now the time to tell her story, - the story of one of the most extraordinary witnesses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



## Filmography Marceline Loridan-Ivens

- . 1960: *Chronique d'un été* (actress)
- . 1962: *Algérie, année zero* (script and co-direction)
- . 1963: *Europort Rotterdam* (script, sound and co-direction)
- . 1965: *Le ciel, la terre* (script, sound and co-direction)
- . 1967: *Loin de Vietnam* (collaboration on the script and co-direction)
- . 1968: *Le 17e parallèle - La guerre du peuple* (script, sound and co-direction)
- . 1969: *Le peuple et ses fusils* (script, sound and co-direction)
- . 1969: *Recontre avec le President Ho Chi Minh* (sound and co-direction)
- . 1975: *Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes* (script, sound and co-direction)
- . 1979: *Commémoration à Paris de la Mort de Mao Ze-Dong* (script and co-direction)
- . 1988: *Une histoire de vent* (script, co-direction and production)
- . 1991: *Golem, l'esprit de l'exile* (actress)
- . 1999: *Peut-être* (actress)
- . 2000: *Éloge de l'amour* (actress)
- . 2002: *La petite prairie aux bouleaux* (script and direction)
- . 2007: *La fabrique des sentiments* (actress)
- . 2008: *Les bureaux de Dieu* (actress)
- . 2013 : *Les Beaux Jours* (actress)

## additional Protagonists

### **THE FATHER (1901 - 1945)**

Salomon Rozenberg, a Polish Jew, who emigrated to France in the 20-ties, became wealthy and bought his family shortly a castle in southern France, where he, mistakenly, believed them there in safety. In 1944 they were betrayed by neighbors and he and Marceline deported to Auschwitz, where he died in 1945.

### **JEAN-PIERRE SERGENT (\*1943)**

Marceline's first love. They got there first filmic experience as protagonists in the film classic *Chronique d'un été*; together they realized their first film in 1962: *Algérie, année zero*. Jean-Pierre later became a filmmaker himself, accompanying Marceline and Ivens on their shoots in Indochina and Vietnam. To this day he is still a very close friend and confidant of Marceline.

### **JORIS IVENS (1898 - 1989)**

Marceline's second husband. One of the greatest film-visionaries of the 20th century. All his life long an "international revolutionary", as he called himself. Together they realized almost twenty films in her thirty-year life- and work partnership.

### **THE SISTER JACQUELINE (\*1933)**

The only survivor from Marceline's family. To this day she takes care of the bookkeeping of Marceline's production company Capifilms and visits her once a week.

### **JUDITH PERRIGNON (\*1967)**

French journalist and author who has worked for a long time in the political department of *Libération*. She has collaborated with Marceline in her book: *And you have not come back*, and supports her also now in her new book.

### **SIMONE VEIL (1927 - 2017)**

French politician. From 1979 to 1982 first female President of the European Parliament. Member of the Académie Française. Childfriend of Marceline, and as well Holocaust survivor. Close friends with Marceline until her death in 2017.

### **XUAN PHONGH (\*1930)**

Vietnamese translator and interpreter, who accompanied Joris Ivens and Marceline on their shootings in Vietnam and with whom Marceline is still in close contact and exchange. Since filming together in the Vietnam War, Phongh refers to Marceline as a "family member".

### **ANOUK AIMÉ (\*1932)**

French film actress, who became famous in films by Frederico Fellini, Claude Lelouch, Marco Bellocchio and Robert Altmann. In 2002 she was Marceline's protagonist in her feature film: *Birkenau and Rosenfeld*.

## Archive material

### French Television

*Témoins: Joris Ivens* by Robert Destanques, 1983

*Simone Veil - a French history*, by David Teboul, 2009

Speech by Simone Veil at her admission to the *Académie Française*, Paris 2010

News images from Simone Veil's funeral at the Panthéon in Paris, July 2017

### ARGOS-Film, Paris

*Chronique d'un été*, 1962, by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin

unpublished Making-of-material of: *Chronique d'un été*

*Algérie, Anné Zero*, 30', 1963 by Marceline Loridan-Ivens and Jean-Pierre Sergent

### Vietnamese Filminstitute

*Le 17-ième parallèle*, 90', 1968, by Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan-Ivens

*La guerre du peuple*, 80', 1969, by Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan-Ivens

### Vietnamese Television

*Retour à Vinh Linh - 40 ans après Le 17e parallèle*, 2007, 50'

### Chinese film archive Peking

*A Piece of Heaven*, by Sun Louisa Wei, 2006

### Capifilms, Paris

*Recontre avec le President Ho Chi Minh*, 30', 1969, by Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan-Ivens

*Commémoration à Paris de la Mort de Mao Ze-Dong*, by Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan-Ivens

*Comment Yukon déplaca les montagnes*, by Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan-Ivens

*Une histoire du vent*, 88', 1989, by Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan-Ivens

*La petite prairie aux bouleaux*, 90', by Marceline Loridan-Ivens

Making-off and photographic material of their films and shootings

### Federal Archive Germany

Interview with Joris Ivens by Gordon Hitchens, 1968

Material on the premiere of: *17e parallèle* at the International Documentary Festival Leipzig with Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan-Ivens, 1968

### ZDF / German Television

Encounter between Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan-Ivens in the occasion of the premiere of: *Histoire de vent*, ASPEKTE, 1989





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