

KINO LORBER

Presents

A RYOT FILM

**THE
DISAPPEARANCE
OF MY MOTHER**

A film by Beniamino Barrese

Italy | 2019 | 94 minutes | Color | Italian with English subtitles

www.thedisappearanceofmymother.com

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LOGLINE

A once-iconic fashion model strives to escape the world of images and disappear for good, but her son's determination to make a final film about her sparks an unexpected collaboration and confrontation with the camera's gaze.

SYNOPSIS

Benedetta wants to disappear. An iconic fashion model in the 1960s, she became a muse to Warhol, Dali, Penn and Avedon. As a radical feminist in the 1970s, she fought for the rights and emancipation of women. But at the age of 75, she becomes fed up with all the roles that life has imposed upon her and decides to leave everything and everybody behind, to disappear to a place as far as possible from the world she knows. Hiding behind the camera, her son Beniamino witnesses her journey. Having filmed her since he was a child in spite of all her resistance, he now wants to make a film about her, to keep her close for as long as possible — or, at least, as long as his camera keeps running. The making of the film turns into a battle between mother and son, a stubborn fight to capture the ultimate image of Benedetta — the image of her liberation.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"I had always been astonished at the weakness and the insufficiency of our memory. So many things disappear. For some reason or other the chief absurdity of life for me consisted in this. Why experience so much in order to forget it afterwards?"

– P.D. Ouspensky, *In Search of The Miraculous*

Ever since my dad gave me a camera when I turned seven, making images has been a strategy to keep hold of the people I loved, saving them from the passing of time. I tried to photograph and film my mother too, but pointing a camera at her has never been easy. I have always felt a reverence, a sort of resistance in the action of photographing her. She just was too much to be contained in a single image — too beautiful, too smart, too funny, too intelligent, too aggressive, too incredible. For as hard as I tried, I just could not effectively capture her soul in a shot. She was a mystery to me.

We always had a strong bond, but I had a feeling that there was so much more behind the part of her that I could see and access. For instance, she never told me that she was a model. I discovered that one day when I found locked in a wardrobe a few big photo portfolios with all her Vogue and Harper's Bazaar covers and editorials from the 1960s. I never told her I had found them, because if she didn't tell me there was probably a reason. The Benedetta I knew was so different from the girl who was staring at me from the magazine pages – and yet, she was so similar. I couldn't easily bring together all of the contrasting pieces of my mother's life, and I started to feel that it was my responsibility to recompose them into a coherent story.

My mum also openly challenged me when it came to why I was taking photos and making films. Why was I so obsessed with it? Was the camera a way to hide, to avoid confronting my experience fully? Why would I need to rely on a camera to keep track of the things that mattered to me? Why didn't I keep a memory of them, letting go of what was not worth preserving? As I grew up, the role of images became progressively more dominant in our culture. And while I was starting to work as a photographer and cinematographer, I realised that the questions that my mum had posed in time were becoming more and more relevant.

Making this film became a way to confront my visceral fear of losing forever what is bound to disappear. At the same time it was a way to collect and preserve my mother's legacy, bringing forward the intellectual ideas and emotional feelings that she had initiated by reflecting on her work as a model. Filming her again turned out to be a real challenge, as it implied exposing my reluctant mum while she was carefully explaining to me that "the lens is the enemy," and she just wanted to vanish, escaping the gaze and leaving behind the world as she knows it. The journey

was hard, and it implied quite a lot of mutual harm –but I hope that she will realise that what I did was hopefully done with the kind of integrity that she has always tried to keep within herself. As for me, I know that I still haven't managed to effectively capture her essence in a frame. Instead, I might have finally learned that this is just impossible. As my mum often repeats, “what truly matters, is always invisible.”

BIOGRAPHIES

BENEDETTA BARZINI

Benedetta Barzini was a successful fashion model in New York in the 1960s, photographed by the likes of Irving Penn and Richard Avedon. She appeared on the cover of the first issue of Vogue Italia in November 1964, with many more covers of Vogue and magazines like Harper's Bazaar to follow. She was a regular at Warhol's Factory and was headed for the top rank of New York models, but decided to return to Italy in 1969. Soon after, she left the modeling business to become a Marxist and feminist organizer in Milan. In 1996 she was offered a teaching position at the University of Urbino and later at Politecnico of Milano, where she teaches "The Meaning of Clothes in Time," an anthropological outlook on clothes deeply connected to the position of women in society.

BENIAMINO BARRESE - Director / Cinematographer

Born in 1986, Beniamino Barrese graduated with a degree in Philosophy at Statale di Milano, International Political Economy at King's College London and later received his MA in Cinematography at the National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield, UK. Since 2011 he has been working as a filmmaker, director of photography and photographer. His work as a DP includes fiction and documentary features, commercials, fashion films, music promos and short films, which have travelled around festivals worldwide. The Disappearance of My Mother is his first feature-length film as a director.

FILIPPO MACELLONI - Producer

Filippo Macelloni is an award-winning director, producer and writer. His work has played in numerous film festivals and on TV networks across the world. Among his most significant credits are the mockumentary Il Mundial dimenticato - The lost World Cup, co-produced and directed with Lorenzo Garzella, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2012; the 2011 documentary Silvio Forever, co-directed with Roberto Faenza, a satirical biopic of former Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi; and the documentary Children Over Time (Rai Teche/Rai Cinema 2016), finalist for the Focal International Awards. With a background in architecture, Filippo is also an accomplished creator of video and art installations and exhibits for museums and institutions in Italy and abroad.

VALENTINA CICOGNA - Editor

Valentina Cicogna is an editor and screenwriter of feature films and documentaries produced and distributed by the main Italian broadcasters and selected in international documentary festivals such as Cinéma du Réel, Visions du Réel and IDFA. The latest documentary written and edited by Valentina, The Call, premiered at IDFA 2017 and won the Midlength Award at Hot Docs

2018. She teaches in the Masters program at OffiCine, IED's school of cinema, and at CISA, Locarno's school of cinema.

AARON CUPPLES - Composer

Aaron Cupples is an Australian music composer, record producer and mix engineer currently based in London, UK. Over the last fifteen years he has worked in various capacities with internationally acclaimed artists and is now focusing primarily on composing for film. Aaron debuted as a feature-length composer with *Island of the Hungry Ghosts* (2018) for which his experimental score was nominated for a British Independent Film Award for Best Music. The film premiered at the 2018 Tribeca Film Festival, where it won the award for Best Documentary, and went on to pick up many awards from IDFA, Nyon Visions du Réel and the Grand Jury prize at the Mumbai Film Festival. As a record producer, Aaron has worked with artists such as Spiritualized, The Vaccines, Blanck Mass, Alex Cameron, and his own project Civil Civic..

KINO LORBER

With a library of over 2,800 titles, Kino Lorber Inc. has been a leader in independent art house distribution for 35 years, releasing 30 films per year theatrically under its Kino Lorber, Kino Classics, KinoNow.com, and Alive Mind Cinema banners, garnering seven Academy Award® nominations in nine years, including documentary nominees *Fire at Sea* (2017) and *Of Fathers & Sons* (2019). Current and upcoming releases include Berlinale Golden Bear winner *Touch Me Not* and Cannes winners Jean-Luc Godard's *The Image Book* and Jafar Panahi's *3 Faces* and Bi Gan's epic 3D film *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. In addition, the company brings over 350 titles yearly to the home entertainment and educational markets through physical and digital media releases. With an expanding family of distributed labels, Kino Lorber handles releases in ancillary media for Zeitgeist Films, Carlotta USA, Adopt Films, Raro Video, and others, placing physical titles through all wholesale, retail, and direct to consumer channels, as well as direct digital distribution through over 40 OTT services including all major TVOD and SVOD platforms.

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CREDITS

A film by
Beniamino Barrese

With
Benedetta Barzini

Produced by
Filippo Macelloni

Editor
Valentina Cicogna
Executive Producers
Beniamino Barrese
Hayley Pappas
Matt Ippolito
Bryn Mooser
Giovanni Storti
Lorenzo Garzella

Cinematography
Beniamino Barrese

Music Composer
Aaron Cupples

a NANOOF production
in collaboration with RAI CINEMA

a RYOT film
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per il Cinema