

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT



a film by BILLIE MINTZ

Portrayal



Doker

"This moving and fascinating film about a young man's investigation into his family's unspoken secret unfolds like a taut thriller... A powerful humantale about the meaning of family, legacy, authorship, and the porous nature of truth."

-JJFF Jury

"Billie Mintz masterfully composes a high stakes, suspenseful thriller with all the elements of a true-crime drama, chasing down the clues to a surprising conclusion."

-Alex Rogalski, HOT DOCS

PORTRAYAL

A FILM BY BILLIE MINTZ

DOCUMENTARY CHANNEL PRESENTS AN INNOVR / ARTIFACT ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION "PORTRAYAL"
A BILLIE MINTZ FILM FEATURING ROMAN LAPSHIN AND OZ ALMOG COMMISSIONING JORDANA ROSS BY BILLIE MINTZ
MUSIC BY LYDIA AINSWORTH EDITED BY MICHELE FRANCIS PRODUCERS BILLIE MINTZ, DANNY WEBBER, BRUCE COWLEY
PRODUCED BY DANNY WEBBER & DIRECTED BY BILLIE MINTZ



PortrayalFilm.com

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PRODUCED BY DANNY WEBBER PRODUCED, WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY BILLIE MINTZ



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"This moving and fascinating film about a young man's investigation into his family's unspoken secret unfolds like a taut thriller, placing the viewer beside him on his harrowing journey to get to the heart of this profound mystery. Both historical and deeply personal, "Portrayal" is a powerful human tale about the meaning of family, legacy, authorship, and the porous nature of truth"

- Schoumann Award Jury, JJFF

LOGLINE

A young man's relationship with his family is compromised when he investigates a dark secret from their past, involving the discovery of thousands of his dead grandfather's missing paintings.

SYNOPSIS (short)

Since he was a child Roman Lapshin has been haunted by a secret his late grandfather revealed to him regarding the mysterious whereabouts of thousands of his grandfather's paintings which had disappeared. Determined to find the paintings and restore his grandfather's legacy Roman sets out to confront the powerful man at the centre of this secret, whom Roman believes exploited his grandfather when he was a desperate immigrant to a new country. But as his journey unfolds Roman realizes that his search for justice and vengeance may not lead to the salvation he had hoped to achieve. "Portrayal" is a powerful human tale following Roman across 3 continents as he comes to terms with the meaning of family, legacy, authorship, and the porous nature of truth.

SYNOPSIS (long)

Since he was a child Roman Lapshin has been haunted by a secret his late grandfather revealed to him when he was only 12 years old. A personal disclosure regarding the mysterious and troubling origins of thousands of pieces of missing artwork his grandfather had painted over his lifetime. As long as he can remember, Roman has been obsessed with the burden of his grandfather's revelation, convinced that he alone must investigate and expose the murky fate of his grandfather's artwork to redeem his grandfather's name and artistic legacy. But finding the paintings will mean going against the wishes of his entire family - who have been guarding this secret all along. It also means confronting the notorious and powerful man at the centre of this secret whom Roman believes exploited his grandfather when he was a desperate, recent immigrant to a new country. Despite the daunting mission for redemption amidst the pressure from his family to leave the past behind, Roman is determined to relentlessly pursue his undertaking regardless of the collateral damage that his actions could cause. But as his journey unfolds he begins to realize that his quest for justice, and his obsession for vengeance against a man he has believed to be the boogeyman since he was a child, may not lead to the salvation he had hoped to achieve. "Portrayal" follows Roman across 3 continents and 5 countries as he tries to put together the pieces of a missing puzzle and come to terms with a family legacy and his own personal journey of restoration, growth and healing.

Filmmakers



Billie Mintz

WRITER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, CINEMATOGRAPHER

Billie Mintz is an award winning filmmaker and investigative journalist who has produced and directed seven feature length documentaries and spent two successful seasons both in front and behind the camera as a featured host on National Geographic's signature series "Explorer". His last feature "The Guardians" which is currently on Amazon Prime, premiered at the 2018 Hot Docs Festival, and has gone on to win numerous awards. His second feature, "The Ponzi Scheme" is an investigation into victims of personal financial fraud which was distributed internationally by Forward Entertainment and premiered on The Sundance Channel. His 2015 feature documentary "Jesus Town USA", executive produced by SKY ATLANTIC, had its world premiere at AMDOCS (The American Documentary Film Festival in Palm Springs) and international premiere at Hot Docs, before airing on Showtime, CBC and Netflix and has been aired globally. It can now also be seen on Amazon Prime.

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Danny Webber

PRODUCER, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, LEGAL COUNSEL

Danny is recognized by Who's Who Legal® and Lexpert® as one of the top entertainment lawyers in Canada. His firm Hall Webber LLP is the official legal counsel to the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television and Canadian Screen Awards and represents a diverse clientele on all matters relating to development, production, financing, Intellectual property, licensing, corporate organization and distribution in the film & television, live theatre, music, publishing, interactive media, sponsorship & endorsements, sporting, e-sports and special events industries. He has also executive producer on more than 20 film & television productions and is a founding member, president and chair of the board of the non-profit Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company.

<http://www.hallwebber.com>

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Michele Francis

EDITOR

Michele Francis is an award winning film editor. After attending the University of Bristol's prestigious post graduate Film and Television production program she has worked with some of the most leading filmmakers like Atom Egoyan, Sarah Polley, and Bruce McDonald. Over her more than 15 years as an editor in Toronto, Michele's work spans many genres of film and television.

<http://glam.on.ca>



Lydia Ainsworth

COMPOSER

Lydia Ainsworth is an internationally acclaimed singer, composer, and producer. Her original scores for film and commercials have screened at festivals such as Sundance, Cannes, and Hot Docs. Her albums have been nominated for a Juno award and shortlisted for the Polaris Prize. She has headlined tours in North America, Europe and Japan.

<http://www.lydiaainsworth.com>



Bruce Cowley

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Bruce was the commissioning editor of documentary Channel for Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. His commissioned films have won numerous industry and festival awards. Bruce has moderated panels at top festivals globally and has conducted several Master Classes on documentary. A 30 year veteran of the film and television business, he is now a film consultant and executive producer through his own company, The Film Counsel



Roman Lapshin in the studio to photograph a collection of his grandfather Vladimir Dvorkin's paintings
"His work deserves to be seen"



Israeli Artist Oz Almog in his studio in Vienna:
"Artists should do what he feels that is necessary for him to produce. if it hurts somebody, bad luck"



Oz Almog closeup in his studio:
“Artists are rotten people, you know.
They should know better but they don’t.”



Oz Almog - *"Don't doubt me, don't doubt my stories. Give me your finger, give me your arm. Stick it in my wound and you'll be convinced that what I'm telling or what I am about is real."*



Oz Almog - "Artist's are like gods, you know?
They're creating out of pile of dirty shit something to be proud of or not..."



An intense confrontation between uncle and nephew in the middle of the Israeli desert about the origins and whereabouts of the paintings.



Roman Lapshin collecting his thoughts and contemplating whether to he should move forward with his plan.



Roman's grandmother expresses her concerns about exposing the family secret.



Roman's grandmother tells Roman she does not want him going after the paintings.



Roman's uncle Max Dvorkin warns Roman: "You have to understand, it's not a good situation. Nobody loves to talk about it..."

DVORKIN V. 2005



After his initial investigation Roman tells his family the imminent fate of the missing paintings



Roman's mother, Asya Lapshin, considers the consequences of exposing her father's secret



Roman discusses his plans with his family with fiancé Erin Harris by his side.



George Haber, former director of the Vienna Jewish Museum, which commissioned Oz Almog's "Him Too?" exhibition questions *"How did you get that idea t make a film about Oz for Canada? What is the relation?"*



George Haber, former director of the Vienna Jewish Museum:
"[Oz] came up with the idea of painting all kinds of Jews, famous Jews and we made this exhibition...It was a very big success...More than 600 paintings"



Oz Almog going through hundreds of paintings boxed away in storage

Dvorik V. 23 or

Billie Mintz Director Statement

"Portrayal" investigates claims against internationally recognized Israeli painter Oz Almog ("Oz"), who allegedly created a false narrative surrounding his career by claiming authorship of paintings that were not his own. Oz built his reputation on this body of work and has to date evaded any inquiry regarding its authenticity except for one unsuspected intervening event: this documentary. What was initially positioned as a straightforward biography documenting Oz's success has inevitably turned into an exposé of the deception he committed in the process of "creating" this biography. Leading the charge to uncover the truth is Roman Lapshin, the grandson of Vladimir Dvorkin, whom Roman has learned is the real painter of Oz's works. Roman is spearheading his own investigation with the full hope and intention of confronting and exposing Oz. At the same time, he is hiding the full truth about these plans from his own family in order to secure their cooperation, leading them to believe that he is only participating in this film for the more altruistic goal of exhibiting his grandfather's work to the world.

Roman initially approached me with the story of his late grandfather, Vladimir Dvorkin, a prolific painter who emigrated from Russia to Israel to escape anti-Semitism and start a new life with more opportunity for his family. Broken and penniless, he had to start his life all over again after serving five years in prison for a crime he did not commit. He went to the streets of Israel to sell portraits, which was very humbling for a painter of such experience living in a country where no one knew his name or of his decorated past. Roman then told me about a man named Oz Almog who discovered Vladimir on the street and hired him to be his "assistant", beginning a relationship that enabled Vladimir to earn a living to support his family but ultimately took advantage of the immigrant painter, leaving him in the shadows while Oz gained fame claiming the paintings to be from his own hand. It was a wild tale that sounded a little unbelievable and worthy of investigation. Roman, now an adult and believing he has to fulfill his dead grandfather's wishes to tell the world the truth and exhibit his body of work in his own name, is preparing to confront Oz and take possession of the body of work rumoured to be in the thousands.

In order to get the full story, I had to approach Oz and find a way for him to participate in the film, which required me to engage in some creative manipulation of the truth myself since Oz would not cooperate if he knew what motivated my investigation. I could not reveal my knowledge of Roman and Dvorkin and their relationship to him. I could only reveal the portion of the truth which Oz wanted to hear – that the purpose of my documentary was to explore his background and what it was that enabled him to become such a prolific and successful artist and also to explore generally what it takes and what it means to have success as an artist and the costs of achieving that success. All of which was still an accurate representation of the what we were doing. Although reluctant, Oz agreed to participate and maintained the story that he was the real painter throughout our initial interviews in the development stage of the film.

Oz is a fascinating antagonist for this documentary. He starts as the protagonist but once the audience realizes that he is living a lie and that Roman is determined to expose it, they too get immersed in the web of lies through dramatic irony. While the audience becomes fully cognizant of the deception that took place, Oz continues to perform a lie for me and the crew. Contributing to what he believes is solely a film on his extensive catalogue and creative process, he unknowingly exposes himself as a liar. It was equally awkward and uncomfortable for me as an investigative journalist having to take this approach knowing it was ironically necessary in order to ultimately tell the real truth. I had to be extremely diligent and careful in gathering the facts given the sensitivity of the information I was collecting, which could ultimately offend or humiliate the artist. Oz is open and because he is unaware of my knowledge of his past, he is constantly giving me information that would normally be protected.

I reached out to Oz withholding that I discovered his work through Roman and asked if I could make a film about him. Although this wasn't the full truth, it was not a lie – I WAS making a film about him, but I wasn't giving him the full story. Over some coaxing, he hesitantly agreed to meet me at a café before deciding to be a part of the film. I flew to Vienna and staked out the meeting place the day before and found a vantage point for the camera so we could film the initial meeting, while Roman sat upstairs watching the whole thing unfold. From this vantage point, Roman had his very first glimpse of the mysterious man of his family's fairy tales. Because I also had a camera on Roman, I caught something that I did not foresee: Roman realizing that he might not be entirely right about Oz's character. I soon realized that although the events of history in Roman's story are true and need further investigating, the immorality may not be so black and white.

What I thought was a story about Oz became a journey of Roman coming to terms with the reality of a world where Oz exists and is needed. There became a new facet of this complicated story: the realization that Oz isn't as bad as we thought he was. Even though Roman ends up confirming that his allegations about Oz are in fact true, he also comes to understand more about the decisions his grandfather needed to make as an immigrant needing to provide for his family and their future – the future that Roman inhabits. Roman is a young man caught in the story his very identity had been shaped around, unable to face the truth, that everyone around him is trying to get him to accept.

"Portrayal" is a quixotic tale of a sheltered young man who confronts his family's controversial mythology and ends up learning about himself. This is an outrageous tale of a young boy who was so affected by his grandfather's mythology that he carried another man's burden with him until he himself was consumed by it. Now, in his mid twenties, he finally decides to track the man down and confront him while demanding justice for his late grandfather through the restoration of his paintings to their rightful owners – his family. What we have is a self-reflective film that explores truth and exploitation. Oz is withholding the full truth from the people; I am withholding the full truth from Oz; and Roman is withholding the full truth from his family about what he is doing. As the story develops, similarities between the men emerge. Both are so committed to a narrative so personal to them that they refuse to see the facts. Through the intimate documentation of exploitation, the film suggests that history is not always truthful or factual and that relationships made in the name of art are always expendable.

Every story that involves history has different versions depending on who is telling it. My interest in filming this documentary was to follow the journey of a young man who came of age while trying to find the truth to the story that was told to him in his childhood by his grandfather. Now an adult he learns the truth that not all stories turn out to be what he thought they were. In this instance, the story that haunted him his entire life ended up transforming him once he sought it out and found the answers. This is a story about family, immigration, art, and exploitation. The film itself wrestles with an unreliable narrator and takes the audience on wild ride through several countries as we confront the ghosts of the past. Very much a revenge film that turns into a redemption one.

Billie Mintz

Selected Filmography

The Guardians (2018 Feature Doc)

The Guardians is an investigative documentary that exposes a history of corruption within the Nevada Guardianship system and reveals a lucrative business that trades the elderly as commodities. Victims are caught in a web spun by private Guardians, enabled by elected officials, lawyers, judges, doctors and healthcare facilities, who have turned the elderly into cash cows in a shady sub-economy.

www.demo.theguardiansdocumentary.com

- CBC, The Documentary Channel
- World Premiere at Hot Docs
- Officially Selected in over 40 film festivals internationally, winner of 7 awards.
- Winner of Top 20 in Hot Docs, Grand Prize at Silverscreens, Audience Award at Buffalo International, Grand Jury Award at Alameda International, Best Documentary at Mindfield, Best Documentary at US Hollywood Golden Film, Best in Show at IndieFEST
- Distributed by Sideways Films and sold to 13 broadcasters internationally

Here I Am (2018 Feature Doc)

Filmmaker, Billie Mintz took up residence at a retirement community to get a glimpse into the private worlds of those living with dementia. Here I Am explores what its like to live with dementia as told by the residents who live on the care floor of that nursing home.

www.hereiamdoc.com

- CBC, The Documentary Channel

National Geographic Explorer (2017/18 Documentary/Lifestyle Series)

Cable Television's longest-running documentary series EXPLORER presents investigative stories from all over the world

- Writer, producer, director, camera, host
- <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/explorer/>
- The National Geographic Channel

Jesus Town, USA (2015 Feature Doc)

For 88 years the residents of a small town in Oklahoma have been putting on the Prince of Peace, passion play. When the man playing Jesus for 8 years retires, his replacement, a long standing member of the cast, has a secret he is hiding from everyone: He is a Buddhist.

www.jesustownusamovie.com

- SKY Atlantic, Showtime, CBC, Netflix
- Hot Docs premiere, American Documentary Film Festival, Heartland International Film Festival, Dokufest, RIDM, Sydney Underground Film Festival
- Best Audience Award at AMDOCS

The Ponzi Scheme (2010 Feature Doc)

When filmmaker Billie Mintz learns he was a victim of a Ponzi scheme, he tracks down the man responsible for weaseling him and countless others out of their life savings.

- Canadian theatrical run
- Sold in over 10 territories
- World Premiere on Sundance Channel
- www.theponzischeme.com

The Message in a Bottle (2010/11 Web Series 60 X 5 minutes)

Canada's largest brewer opens the door to a filmmaker allowing him to learn how they create and deliver their responsible drinking message and fund his investigation to see if its working.

CREDITS

Written and Directed by:	BILLIE MINTZ
Produced by:	DANNY WEBBER BILLIE MINTZ
Featuring:	ROMAN LAPSHIN OZ ALMOG
Introducing the art work of	VLADIMIR DVORKIN
Edited by:	MICHELE FRANCIS
Music by:	LYDIA AINSWORTH
Executive Producers	BRUCE COWLEY BILLIE MINTZ DANNY WEBBER
Commissioning Editor	JORDANA ROSS
Cinematography by:	BILLIE MINTZ
Camera Operators	BILLIE MINTZ ED GODSELL ERIN HARRIS NEMANJA STOJKOVIC IGAL HECHT ROMAN LAPSHIN RYAN WEATHERBY ROB SPENCE RJ MALONEY SONJA AUFDERKLAMM
Sound Recordists	INNA DAVIDOVNA RYAN WEATHERBY NIKOLA RADIVOJEVIC NOAH MINTZ
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Field producer, Israel	IGAL HECHT
Assistant Editors	ROB SPENCE ANDREW CROMEY
Production Coordinator	ERIN HARRIS
Dialogue Translation	INNA DAVIDOVNA YANA GOLD
Production Assistants	INNA DAVIDOVNA SIGI FOPPEN ROB SPENCE KAILEIGH WEBBER
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Carla Murray
Thomas Cetnar
Renan Deodato
INSTIG8R
Amstel Televisie Vijf B.V. (AT5)

“My Love for Evermore”

Written by: Oliver Baroni & Stephen Thomas

Published by: District 6 Music

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Roman Lapshin
Erin Harris
Asya Lapshin
Oleg Lapshin
Natasha Dvorkin
Helen Lapshin
Jacob Gildor

Aaron Finos
Max Dvorkin
Valery Dvorkin
Katya Dvorkin
Kfir Dvorkin
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