

ICA FRAMES of REPRESENTATION

1. Can you speak a little of the creative editorial choices you made to depersonalise your subjects and address the universal acts, motivations and atrocities of warfare? How does this relate to the film's title?

This question addresses to the core of the film. Since the beginning of the project we had no interest in portraying war from a naturalistic, historical, social or political point of view. Our aim was to consider a case study, such as Liberian civil war, only to transfigure its material reality in order to build a non-narrative piece that could speak a wider, non local, language. As a consequence of this choice we expressly avoided to film as much as possible the psychological aspects of our characters as well their everyday life or social context. Our protagonists had to be living-arguments, ethical instances or physical embodiments of abstract forces. From a technical point of view, this brought us to adopt hyper close-up as it allowed us to exclude any reference to a particular space and time. Since the location where the encounters were staged was out of the frame, each interview could be in any place or any time. Out of context as they were shoot, the viewer is forced not only to concentrate on their tales of war but also on their physical performances. This is the way we always conceived and approached them, as human expressions of conflict considered as a principle or a force imposing its own law, something that goes beyond any moral, juridical or political commandment. That brings to the title which quotes from greek philosopher Heraclitus' Fragment 53 stating "war as father of all and of all king", where conflict in its largest sense is the philosophical and metaphysical force at the basis of the whole nature, its birth, its development and its end.

2. Amongst those interviewed for this film did you sense a difference between boasting and confessing these bare and quite radical personal accounts of warfare? Quite simply: Why do you think your subjects agreed to be interviewed?

As you can imagine we were not able to interview all the warriors we listed and we looked for. Since prosecutions are still pending on some former fighters, this brought understandable suspicion on us. Nevertheless, our way of approach to the subject without judging what they did made them comfortable and persuaded some of them to talk. Moreover, it needs to be generally understood that most of these warriors fought for fifteen to twenty years, that is the biggest part of their life. These years spent on the front represent the most important experience of their whole life. During the years of war, as they were high rank generals, these warriors use to be well known and powerful. Yet, at the end of the war they were dismissed by the government and forgot by most of the population. So they were quite happy to meet someone willing to know about their stories. That is why, once we were able to have their trust, they were willing to speak about them. Moreover, every fighter still believes that the cause he fought for was legitimate and generally there is no regret for what they've done: atrocities were common committed by every part under the eyes of everybody. There's no point in denying them.