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PRESENT



**TIGER
AWARD**

INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM
2023

LE SPECTRE DE BOKO HARAM

A FILM BY CYRIELLE RAINGOU



A CO-PRODUCTION LABEL VIDEO, TARA GROUP, CANAL+INTERNATIONAL, TÉLÉ BOCAL, EVASION VIDEO, JCMR WITH THE SUPPORT OF TĒNK PLATFORM, TÉLÉ TCHAD, PROCIREP/SOCIÉTÉ DES PRODUCTEURS, ANGOA,
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RETOUR À LA TABLE DES MATIÈRES

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Trailer

<https://vimeo.com/797791756>

TECHNICAL SHEET

Original Title	Le spectre de Boko Haram
Year	2023
Duration	75 min.
Country	Cameroon
Direction and Script	Cyrielle Raingou
Music	Griots
Cinematography	Cyrielle Raingou, Bertin Fotso
Sound	Hervé Guemete, Hubert Domkam.
Editing	Christine Bouteiller
Sound editing and mixing	Florence Hermitte
Casting	Falta Souleymane, Ibrahim Alilou, Mohamed Alilou, Lamine Yerima
Production	Coproduction Cameroon-France; Label Video, Véronique Holley / Tara Group, Dieudonné Alaka Canal+ International – Télé Bocal
Synopsis	A group of children forge their own world amid the dangers of armed conflict. We meet Falta, studious and hardworking, who is struggling to come to terms with the death of her father in a terrorist attack. Her classmate, Ibrahim, and older brother, Mohamad, struggle to balance their childlike energy with a traumatic past that takes them away from the innocence of their eight and eleven years

CRITICS - Excerpts

" The nonfiction film is a clear-eyed look at how everyday life and the accompanying humdrum tasks go on despite the threat of violence at any moment. "

Murtada Elfadl: Variety

"The emphasis here is not so much on what Boko Haram is or does, but rather its impact upon those whose lives have been shaped by its existence.

Neil Young: Screendaily

« It is a moving documentary in which one can find many moments of great sincerity ».

.Davide Abbatescianni: Cineuropa

"A truly disturbing documentary in its simplicity that brings to life the everyday life in a corner of the world that has never really been told. Le spectre de Boko Haram won the Film Festival Rotterdam and we are delighted"

. Mauro Donzelli Coming Soon

"There is an almost Bressonian morality in Raingou's approach, all the more appreciable because his film has no expressive ambition whatsoever: there is a univocal relationship with the urgency of what he shows, and it is a relationship that belongs to the scale of values of a historical and human proximity - and not just an ideal and humanitarian one - with the events and people he represents."

Massimo Causo : Duel

"The documentary filmmaker places herself at the level of a child, at that altitude where the trivial and the mysterious have something vertiginous. She maintains an off-field of unbearable violence - via shots of soldiers patrolling the edge of the frame or the liberated speech of the kids, suddenly authors of the film. The way they tell, with all the seriousness one can afford at 10 years old, a story about "witches who turn into cats", and whom they would have executed themselves during a raid, opens a terrifying abyss for a whole next generation".

.Léo Soesanto : Libération

The film recounts the lives of the children, but it does so in such a delicate, precise and luminous way that the tragedy that inhabits each of these tiny existences suddenly acquires the size of the enormous, the incomprehensible, perhaps the eternal...The film has only just begun its journey and everything indicates, given the unanimity and enthusiasm around it, that we are facing one of the great non-fiction films (not exactly documentary) of the year.

Luis Martinez : El Mundo



Cyrielle Raingou

Film Maker

BIOGRAPHY

Cyrielle Raingou is a Cameroonian filmmaker who is passionate about the concept and development of a certain African artistic identity, its promotion on an international scale and the economic interest it generates. She firmly believes that art can make a living in Africa. She often uses legends, metaphor and the symbolism of certain animals to support human stories in their complexity; and the mystery of life.

Cyrielle Raingou participated in the "Citizen Connections" project launched by CFI, the French Agency for Media Cooperation in France, Senegal, Ivory Coast and Benin, in 2016/2017. She obtained this recognition thanks to her project Limegbie (the eye of the woman), which initiates women in rural areas to the realization of short documentaries (03min) on their life and civic commitment. She is one of the 2018 Mandela Washington Fellows. As part of this program, she studied civic leadership at Drexel University in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania State in the United States); and shot her short film "Requiem Prologue" in Austin (Texas), which was screened at the 2019 Luxor African Film Festival. She created a production company RaingouFilms since 2014, directed short films such as "Challenge" 2017, "The neighbors" 2018, "Requiem prologue" 2019, "the lamb" 2020, "Parallel" 2021,

"Mother just a smile" 2022. "Challenge" has been selected in many festivals in Africa and beyond the continent. She is currently working on her first feature-length documentary film "Le spectre de Boku Haram", focusing on the post-terrorist period in the far north of Cameroon. Cyrielle Raingou holds a Master's degree in law and a Master's degree in documentary filmmaking from the European Erasmus DocNomads Joint Master program..

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EDUCATION

DocNomads Joint Masters 2019-2021
Réalisation documentaire
Université de Drexel 2018
Leadership Civique
Université de Yaoundé I, 2013-2014
Master 1 production cinématographique
Université de Yaoundé II, 2004-2008
Maîtrise en droit privé

Language knowledge

Bamoun	native language
Français	native language
Anglais	fluent

FILMOGRAPHY



Le Spectre de Boku Haram (75 min), 2023

In the elementary school of Kolofata, (Far North of Cameroon), a group of children attend a class over which the shadow of Boko Haram hangs. A film about a second chance, a conflict zone; from the point of view of children who have never stopped living.

Résidences d'écriture : Bobo Dioulasso 2016 au Burkina Faso, organisée par Africadoc; Artiste en résidence 2018, organisé par Dok.fest München. **Pitch :** Rencontre de Tènk 2016 à St Louis, Sénégal ; Africa Roundtable, Dok.fest München 2018. Fonds de développement : OIF , « Brouillon d'un rêve » de La SCAM en France, Aide au développement et production CNC, PROCIREP, ANGOA..., IMS Media support, Canal+ International et Tènk **Producteurs:** Vidéo Label (France), Tara Group (Cameroun), JCMR (Cameroun).

The lamb (13min), 2021

In the spring, many lambs dream of being free in the very near future...

<https://vimeo.com/460536466>



Requiem Prologue (16min) 2019, (fiction)



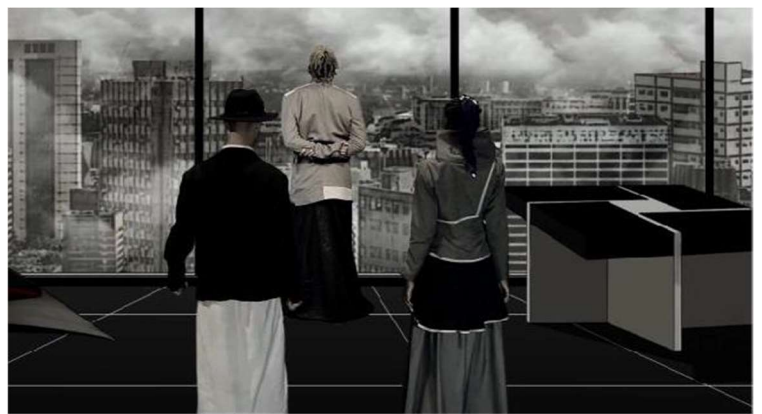
Young Corporal Mengue has just lost his mother on a battlefield in the middle of a savannah and must choose between killing his best friend who has become an enemy or agreeing to carry out her final request.

<https://vimeo.com/311530118>

Challenge (14 min), 2017 (Sci-Fi)

Empress is a young video artist and blogger who runs a social medium that promotes the actions and lives of rural women. This year 2070 marks the beginning of the end of the Internet. A new order is introduced to regulate and gradually reduce access to the connection. How far is the Empress willing to go to keep her access to the Internet?

<https://vimeo.com/257352101>





INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM

Le spectre de Boko Haram

Since 2014, the terrorist organisation Boko Haram has led strikes against the villages and people of the Far North Region of Cameroon. Today, this constant threat of violence has woven itself into daily existence.

In her profoundly affecting debut feature, Cyrielle Raingou follows a group of children as they carve out their own worlds amid the dangers of armed conflict. We meet the precocious Falta, studious and hardworking, eager to process her father's death in a terrorist attack. Her classmate, Ibrahim, and his older brother Mohamad struggle with balancing their boyhood energy and a traumatic past that strays them from their eight and 11-year-old innocence.

Raingou, a native of the Far North Region herself, approaches her young subjects with a delicate and unobtrusive observance, allowing them to dictate the reality of their surroundings through their own words, movements and perspectives. The result is a distinct and profound study of the contrasts of a war zone: hope and despair, innocence and terrorism, the present and future, western influence and traditional culture.

As the children prepare for school, gunshots ring out in the distance. In the schoolyard, amidst soccer games and jump rope, military servicemen patrol the edges of the frame. But Raingou holds on to the laughter and innocence of the children's play, which stretches far above war's reach.

– Fiona Armour

Critique : *Le Spectre de Boko Haram*

par [Davide Abbatescianni](#)

06/02/2023 - Le premier long-métrage de Cyrielle Raingou examine les plaies béantes laissées par l'organisation terroriste dans un village camerounais situé à la frontière avec le Nigéria



Le titre du premier long-métrage de **Cyrielle Raingou**, [Le Spectre de Boko Haram](#) [+], ne saurait convenir plus parfaitement à son sujet. Dans ce film, projeté dans le cadre de la Compétition Tiger de l'[IFFR](#), où il a remporté le premier prix (lire l'[article](#)), la réalisatrice fait l'inventaire des répercussions des brutalités et de la débauche meurtrière de la notoire organisation terroriste du titre à Kolofata, un petit village au nord du Cameroun, à la frontière avec le Nigeria.

Le film commence sur un plan nocturne illuminé par un feu derrière lequel est assise une fillette. Elle raconte les circonstances affreuses dans lesquelles son père a été tué. Alors qu'il nettoyait une gouttière, l'homme a été abordé par des étrangers qui tenaient un poulet. Il leur a demandé s'il était à vendre et à quel prix et d'un coup, un des deux hommes a pressé un bouton

sous ses vêtements et s'est fait exploser. Cette scène est suivie par quelques plans brefs montrant la communauté apparemment tranquille de Kolofata, avant que le calme ne soit rompu par le bruit de coups de feu, non loin du village.

Le témoignage de la petite et les scènes qui suivent constituent une ouverture simple mais efficace qui font bien comprendre au spectateur à quel point le spectre du titre reste en fait bien vivant dans les mémoires et la vie quotidienne de la communauté, malgré leurs courageux efforts pour tourner la page.

Raingou décide ensuite de s'intéresser plus particulièrement à un groupe d'enfants. Après avoir rencontré **Falta Souleymane** (la petite fille de la première scène), qui s'avère très mature pour son âge et désireuse de surmonter psychologiquement le destin de son père, on fait la connaissance d'**Ibrahim Alilou** et son frère aîné **Mohamed**, qui n'arrivent pas à se remettre des traumatismes vécus et à trouver l'équilibre entre leur vivacité et leurs bien plus banales obligations scolaires.

L'approche de la documentariste n'est jamais invasive et avant tout observationnelle. Le fait qu'elle connaît bien les villageois (notamment l'instituteur de l'école primaire locale, qui semble être une référence à Kolofata) et la réalité difficile qu'elle traite transparaît, clair comme de l'eau de roche, et lui permet d'être délicate et sensible avec ses jeunes sujets.

Ce qui crée un contraste prononcé à l'intérieur du film est la tranquillité surréaliste et l'aise avec laquelle les enfants reviennent sur les actes abjects dont ils ont été témoins, dans un village désormais gardé par l'armée. De leur côté, du moins en surface, les adultes semblent plus faibles, mais c'est bien là le sujet : comment chacun appréhende la douleur et les différents niveaux de conscience des choses qu'ont les gens à différents moments de leur vie.

En somme, voilà un documentaire émouvant où l'on peut trouver beaucoup de moments de grande sincérité. Il est frappant de voir, par exemple, une femme de 35 ans qui a perdu son mari dans des circonstances tragiques expliquer à sa toute jeune fille qu'elle est malgré tout reconnaissante d'avoir passé les meilleures années de sa vie avec l'homme qu'elle aimait, avec lequel elle ne se disputait jamais. Cette simple pensée suffit à présent à l'aider à continuer de vivre et s'occuper de son enfant.

Le Spectre de Boko Haram a été produit par la société camerounaise Tara Group et la française [Label Vidéo](#), en coproduction avec les chaînes françaises [Canal+ International](#) et Télé Bocal.

Cyrielle Raingou's first feature film examines the gaping wounds left by the terrorist organization in a Cameroonian village on the border with Nigeria.

*The title of Cyrielle Raingou's first feature film, *The Spectre of Boko Haram* [+], could not be more fitting for its subject. In this film, which screened in the IFFR Tiger Competition, where it won first prize (read the article), the director takes stock of the repercussions of the brutality and murderous debauchery of the notorious terrorist organization of the title in Kolofata, a small village in northern Cameroon, on the border with Nigeria.*

The film begins with a night shot illuminated by a fire behind which sits a young girl. She recounts the horrific circumstances in which her father was killed. While cleaning a gutter, the

man was approached by strangers holding a chicken. He asked them if it was for sale and at what price and suddenly one of the two men pressed a button under his clothes and blew himself up. This scene is followed by a few brief shots showing the seemingly quiet community of Kolofata, before the calm is broken by the sound of gunfire, not far from the village.

The testimony of the girl and the scenes that follow are a simple but effective opening that make the viewer understand how much the spectre of the title remains alive in the memories and daily life of the community, despite their courageous efforts to turn the page.

Raingou then decides to focus on a group of children. After meeting Falta Souleymane (the little girl in the first scene), who proves to be very mature for her age and willing to psychologically overcome her father's fate, we meet Ibrahim Alilou and his older brother Mohamed, who are unable to recover from the traumas they have experienced and to balance their liveliness with their more mundane school obligations.

The documentary filmmaker's approach is never invasive and primarily observational. The fact that she knows the villagers well (especially the local elementary school teacher, who seems to be a reference in Kolofata) and the difficult reality she deals with shines through, clear as day, and allows her to be delicate and sensitive with her young subjects.

What creates a sharp contrast within the film is the surreal tranquility and ease with which the children look back on the despicable acts they witnessed, in a village now guarded by the army. On the surface at least, the adults seem weaker, but that's the point: how everyone deals with pain and the different levels of awareness people have at different times in their lives.

All in all, this is a moving documentary where one can find many moments of great sincerity. It is striking to see, for example, a 35-year-old woman who lost her husband in tragic circumstances explain to her young daughter that she is nevertheless grateful to have spent the best years of her life with the man she loved, with whom she never argued. This simple thought is now enough to help her continue to live and care for her child.

Le Spectre de Boko Haram was produced by the Cameroonian company Tara Group and the French company Label Vidéo, in co-production with the French channels Canal+ International and Télé Bocal.

VARIETY

Feb 5, 2023 7:05pm PT

‘Le Spectre de Boko Haram’ Review: Living Under the Threat of Violence in Northern Cameroon

The top prize winner at the Rotterdam Film Festival, Cyrielle Raingou's nonfiction feature captures the everyday day lives of three school children living on the periphery of a war zone.



Courtesy of IFFR

The militant group Boko Haram has been a dangerous and ubiquitous presence in Nigeria and its neighboring countries for many years. In “[Le Spectre de Boko Haram](#),” Cameroonian filmmaker [Cyrielle Raingou](#) focuses on their presence in a small village in northern Cameroon, on the border with Nigeria. Her observational and gritty documentary registers the impact of Boko Haram’s actions on three school-age children, brothers Mohamed and Ibrahim and their classmate Falta. The nonfiction film is a clear-eyed look at how everyday life and the accompanying humdrum tasks go on despite the threat of violence at any moment.

The three children go to school, work at harvesting the fields and sometimes just skulk around like many children their age, avoiding anything serious. Menacing Boko Haram soldiers are omnipresent in the periphery with their big guns and large trucks, parading around in camouflage outfits. There’s a stark contrast between the brothers and Falta. She lives with her mother and siblings and the film follows that family dynamic. When she asks her mother to tell

her how her father was killed by Boko Haram, the moment eerily recalls scenes seen in other movies where a child asks about how their parents met. It touches on the same notes of love and life, though here it includes death.

Mohamed and Ibrahim have been separated from their parents, and it's never clear if there are any adults in their lives. The brothers, who are refugees in this village, laugh as they recall their encounters with Boko Haram soldiers. They talk about bombs, slit throats, even being whipped so disarmingly, the violence recedes for a moment. However, they can't escape the melancholy that creeps in as they try to recount to each other how they got separated from their parents. Mohammed, the older, might know more than his younger brother, but he never tells, neither to his brother nor to the other people in the village who question him. Perhaps he saw something; perhaps he thinks they are on the wrong side of this conflict and saying anything resembling the truth might implicate him and his brother. Raingou's rigorously observational methods perceptively show how the adults around them might be judging them.

As they spend more time in front of the cameras talking, the stories the brothers tell become more fanciful. Rooted in their reality at first with talk of soldiers and actual events that happened, it soon expands to include tall tales of witches turning into cats. This could be a child's way of making sense of, or dealing with, the constant threat to life around them. Aware of the cameras at all times, sometimes they look straight into the lens, they could also be playing it up for the filmmakers. Whether this is their nature or an affectation for the cameras it adds up to a fascinating glimpse into their lives and coping mechanisms.

Unadorned and gritty, Raingou's filmmaking has no embellishments. There are no musical cues to stir emotions, no fancy camera angles or fast edits to hammer home a point. The strength of the project comes from observing these children and the connections they make, or fail to make, with those around them. Their teacher Mr. Lamine tries to impart a sense of normalcy by being a taskmaster with school work. The differing ways in which Mohamed, Ibrahim and Falta react to that subtly shows their psychological state and how they are dealing with the situation.

As the film goes on, it becomes clear that Raingou cannot figure out an ending. The conflict still rages on. The environment Mohamed, Ibrahim and Falta live in, is still volatile. So the narrative feels incomplete, but that's just the nature of existence in this part of the world. Things change suddenly, lives end suddenly or they can just go on as they are. At a brisk 81 minutes, Raingou manages to capture that juxtaposition and shine a light on part of the world that needs more attention.

SCREEN DAILY

‘The Spectre Of Boko Haram’: Rotterdam Review

By Neil Young 3 February 2023

Sensitive Tiger-winning documentary looks at the impact of terror group Boko Haram on the lives of young people



‘The Spectre Of Boko Haram’

Dir/scr: Cyrielle Raingou. Cameroon/France. 2023. 75mins

A subdued but tense glimpse into the terrorism-darkened lives of three children in a Cameroon refugee-settlement, *The Spectre of Boko Haram* is a dutiful, empathetic and sensitive feature-length debut from writer-director Cyrielle Raingou. Breaking no new formal ground and clocking in at a brisk 75 minutes, it scooped the top prize in Rotterdam’s Tiger competition, and this success will doubtless open further festival doors, especially at documentary-oriented events and those with human-rights themes, while the intimate scale of the production means that little will be lost in the transition to likely small-screen play.

The emphasis here is not so much on what Boko Haram is or does, but rather its impact upon those whose lives have been shaped by its existence

The militant Islamist organisation Boko Haram has achieved prominent notoriety in the last two decades, operating out of north-east Nigeria and violently impacting upon neighbouring areas in Chad, Mali, Niger and Cameroon. Around the world the group (whose official name translates as “Group of the People of Sunnah for Dawa and Jihad”) is best known for its staunch opposition to the education of girls and women; ‘Boko Haram’ is a semi-slang term meaning ‘Western education is forbidden’.

Raingou proceeds on the basis that the viewer is aware of Boko Haram and its goals; the only direct information imparted is via opening title-cards which somewhat vaguely state that ‘the terrorist threat lurks in the mountains’. The decision to avoid sketching the bigger picture is evidently a deliberate one; the emphasis here is not so much on what Boko Haram is or does, but rather its impact upon those whose lives have been shaped by its existence.

The film’s main focus is on three protagonists in Kolofata, very close to the Nigerian border: Falta (aka Yake), a girl of around 12 whose father was among eight killed by a suicide bomber; and the Nigerian brothers Mohamed (approximately Falta’s age) and Ibrahim (a little younger). The brothers were previously in effect boy-soldiers for Boko Haram; the cheerful pair chat in matter-of-fact style about horrifying atrocities in which they were forced to take part.

Operating in conventionally observational fly-on-the-wall style, Raingou eavesdrops on conversations where unspoken matters count just as much as audible words; we read between the lines to glean a picture of the traumas undergone by these ordinary-seeming youths. There is little remarkable about individual scenes, and indeed the film sometimes seems underpowered and even innocuous - but there is considerable cumulative impact.

Little in the way of drama or incident occurs until around the 50-minute mark, when Falta is diagnosed with malaria (thankfully not serious), and the brothers suddenly go missing — there are rumours the pair may have drowned. But Raingou keeps everything at a low emotional temperature throughout, and is chiefly concerned with evoking the quotidian lives of her subjects.

Among the youth of Kolofata education is clearly paramount (most of the pupils we see, especially Falta, are assiduously studious) but not all-consuming – work must also be done, and tiny goat herd Aladji illustrates the conflict between schooling and farming. In tandem with cinematographer Bertin Fotso, Raingou economically conveys the unrelieved poverty and substandard infrastructure of Kolofata, amid the natural splendours of its hilly environs.

The inescapable presence of heavily-armed soldiers (allied to the militaristic nature of school discipline) adds ominous notes of danger, accentuated by the occasional rat-a-tat of not-so-distant gunfire, the noise of passing helicopter, the rumbles of thunder. In a film which eschews visual flourish, Raingou does include one striking vista of black clouds lowering above a darkened landscape, with only a narrow band of sunlit sky visible between the two — perhaps symbolising the slim, optimistic possibility of a brighter future for Kolofata’s kids.

Production companies: Tara Group, Label Video, Je Capture Ma Realite

with a future project; we as an audience can eagerly look forward to it.

VARIETY

Feb 5, 2023

By Marta Balaga

Rotterdam Winner Cyrielle Raingou on Cameroon Documentary ‘Le Spectre de Boko Haram’: ‘My Mission Isn’t Over’



Courtesy of Cyrielle Raingou

It has been a long road for Cameroon’s [Cyrielle Raingou](#), the director of documentary “Le Spectre de Boko Haram,” about children growing up surrounded by terrorist organization Boko Haram, winner of the Intl. Film Festival Rotterdam’s Tiger Award.

“Life can be crazy, no?,” she tells *Variety* after her win.

Initially following a different protagonist, Raingou decided to scrap the entire project in order to, she says, tell the story she wanted to tell.



“Le Spectre de Boko Haram” Courtesy of IFFR

“It was very, very hard. I dedicated three years of my life to that and spent all my development funds. But it just wasn’t right! I was really depressed at that moment. Still, I knew I had to stick to that decision.”

In “Le Spectre de Boko Haram,” Raingou shows daily life that goes on despite constant threat, hidden away in the nearby mountains. The film was produced by Dieudonné Alaka and Veronique Holley for Tara Group and Label Vidéo.

“It’s like having all these beautiful apples, knowing that one is rotten. That’s how it feels over there. Everything seems perfect – for one day. But then you hear gunshots, explosions. These people stay, because it’s also their way of resistance. Of saying: ‘This place belongs to me and you won’t drive me away.’”

Raingou decided to focus on children this time around, eager to hear their stories. Falta is dealing with the loss of her father, brothers Ibrahim and Mohamed miss their parents and slowly open up about what happened to them.

“Children don’t have a filter,” she notes.

“They will tell you how they see things and everything comes straight from the heart. When I talked to adults, it was different. There were many complaints and explanations.”

Also because, she notes, local people have grown wary of documentary filmmakers.

“Whenever there are cameras in Africa, they are there to point out misery and poverty. I grew up in a little village [in the same region] and assumed that everything beautiful and inspiring would come from the outside. From the Western world,” she says.

“Conflicts, UNICEF – these were the images from Africa I grew up with. You don’t want to live in a place like that, so I studied, I was the best at everything. My family wasn’t rich, so this was my chance to get out.”

Now, she lives in Paris.

“I want foreign filmmakers to think about that. You might be coming to Africa with the best intentions, but by repeating [these images] you are destroying people’s imagination and dreams.”

Raingou wanted to show joy in her film, not just fear, family bonds and tenderness.

“I want people to see the whole picture,” she says.

“When I met Falta’s mother, for example, she was still grieving. But every time she talked about her husband, there was light in her eyes. She told her daughter how they met, how he would walk her home. She never shared it before because it’s a taboo to talk about your relationship. But also because no one asked.”

In her next project, fiction film “I’m Coming for You,” Raingou will focus solely on women, on a young mother who survives by trading with Boko Haram terrorists. Once exposed, and banished from her village, she loses her baby as well.

“It will be wilder. I am creating a community where women are supporting each other,” she says.

“She embarks on a journey to find her child and that’s when she meets them, fighting against Boko Haram and the domination of men.” While still in early stages, it already won Raingou Munich Film Up!’s Kirch Foundation Award last year.

Still, as she reveals, she is not quite ready to move on from “Le Spectre de Boko Haram,” desperate to find two young protagonists who are now missing.

“I don’t have a choice! I am still involved in their lives; it didn’t just stop after I finished shooting. We want to find these boys, also because they need a family, they need education. No, we are not done and we will never be done,” she stresses.

“I promised Falta’s mother I will pay for her kids’ studies. I am who I am today because I had that chance. My mission isn’t over.”