

The Angel of Bucha

AN ORDINARY HERO IN UKRAINE

A FILM BY MÉLANIE NUNES

hikari





Film Summary

A quiet hero in the heart of chaos, **Konstantin Gudauskas**, known as The Angel of Bucha, is a former Kazakh human rights activist who sought asylum in Ukraine. When the Russian invasion began in February 2022, he took the wheel of his car to evacuate civilians from Bucha, a city marked by the horrors of war. Thanks to his Kazakh passport, his deep knowledge of the region, and his courage, he managed to save **203 people**, often women, children, and the elderly, dodging enemy checkpoints and risking his life every time.

But Konstantin didn't just rescue — he bore witness. As a firsthand observer of the atrocities, he meticulously documented the massacres, **gathering photos, videos, and testimonies**, particularly from survivors of wartime sexual violence.

One turning point was the story of a teenage girl raped in front of her mother, who later died from her injuries. Horrified, Konstantin began compiling a list of such crimes — recording **173 cases** which he later submitted to Ukraine's judicial authorities.

Three years into the war, he continues **his humanitarian missions** on the front lines, delivering food, supplies, and evacuating civilians. He has buried **74 bodies**, still trying to identify many of them. Despite constant threats and near-death encounters, he remains committed to his mission, summed up in his words:

“I'm afraid of dying by doing nothing.”

Through the portrait of this ordinary man who became essential, the film pays tribute to a silent form of resistance — built on courage, memory, and humanity.

Visual References



Director's Note

On February 24, 2022, the world changed. Russia's invasion of Ukraine unleashed a wave of violence, displacement, and terror. But within that darkness, unexpected figures emerged — essential and resilient. Among them, **Konstantin Gudauskas**, a Kazakh political refugee and former music video director, became one of the first civilian rescuers of the war. Ukrainians would soon call him The Angel of Bucha.

This film stems from a sense of urgency and responsibility. It does not aim to document the war from a military or strategic viewpoint, but to tell the story of one man — and those he saved. To bear witness to what happens when **humanity resists**, when an individual chooses to confront horror armed only with a car, a passport, and an unshakable belief in life.

For months, Konstantin drove Ukraine's treacherous roads. He smuggled civilians — women, children, the elderly — out of occupied areas. He tricked Russian checkpoints, bribed soldiers, risked his life. But most of all, he listened. In the silence of his vehicle, **survivors of wartime rape** began to speak. Their whispered stories — of women, girls, even children — became the testimonies he recorded with care.

This film is also a **work of memory**. Through Konstantin's story, I want to honor all those anonymous heroes who, in the shadows of war, choose to rescue, to protect, to record. Far from glorification, the film explores one man's moral dilemmas, tenacity, and unwavering commitment to truth and remembrance.

This film is also a **political act**: to amplify voices that war tries to silence, to highlight civilian courage, to preserve evidence for future justice. Konstantin now works closely with Ukraine's Prosecutor General. His archive may one day become courtroom proof. This film extends that effort — a living record, a voice for those who can no longer speak.



Biography

Mélanie Nunes

Mélanie Nunes is a French journalist and documentary filmmaker. Specializing in long-form reporting and investigative documentaries, she has developed a body of work for major broadcasters such as **ARTE, France 2, TF1, and M6.**

Trained at the **French Press Institute (IFP - Panthéon-Assas University)** after a background in international studies at Sorbonne Nouvelle, she quickly oriented her journalism toward international reporting. She started at **Europe 1**, where she covered both national and global affairs, then served as a correspondent for Radio France in Spain, producing stories for **France Culture, France Info, and France Inter.**

Her passion for reporting from complex environments is most evident in her documentary work, with ARTE Reportage providing a perfect space to merge immersion, rigorous investigation, and sensitive narrative form. Notable works include:

- **“The Driver of Bucha”** (2025) – the poignant story of Konstantin Gudauskas, who rescued over 200 civilians from occupied areas during the war in Ukraine and documented war crimes, especially sexual violence;
- **“The Children of Calais”** (2022) – an investigation into the lives of unaccompanied minors in the Calais jungle and the failures of European migration policies;
- **“Deadly Sugarcane in Nicaragua”** (2017) – an exposé on chronic kidney disease among agricultural workers under extreme labor conditions.

Mélanie focuses on the **grey zones of globalization**, vulnerable populations, and those who resist in silence. Her interest in international reporting is not exoticism, but responsibility — building bridges between local struggles and global issues.

She has won several awards — **Micro d'Or 2018, Varenne Radio Prize 2016, Rotary Journalism Prize 2015** — and has reported from **Afghanistan, Iraq, West Africa, and Andalusia**, always seeking to document what history too often leaves behind.

Fluent in **Portuguese, Spanish, and English**, she sees journalism as a tool for investigation, remembrance, and transmission, using film to make the human visible amid chaos.



Producer's Statement

Bucha. February 2022. The name of this northern Kyiv city is now etched into the list of martyred towns. A war crime: more than 500 civilians massacred by the Russian army.

We didn't cover Bucha in the heat of breaking news. We allowed space for reflection — a hallmark of many of our productions.

In October 2024, Mélanie Nunes approached me with a proposal. Her angle, which in our profession defines commitment, was the story of a **historical anonymous figure**. Konstantin Gudauskas. An ordinary man. One of those who take action for the good of all.

I didn't know Konstantin. But as I read Mélanie's proposal, I realized this humble man had become **one of the Righteous**. The Angel of Bucha.

Since 2023, I've worked regularly with Mélanie. On social issues, stories that collide with today's transformations — solidarity, migration, violence against women, police brutality.

Mélanie has the **curiosity and humanity** essential to powerful storytelling. She embodies the tenacity of journalists who never give up. Who seek truth — through facts, **and only facts**.

Producing The Angel of Bucha was an intensely powerful experience. I'm proud to have supported her on this path — alongside **François Cauwel**, whose cinematography so accurately captured this untold story, and **Jeanne Bureau**, whose editing brought it to life with precision

Frédéric Lafont



Production

An independent producer and news agency, Hikari has produced several hundred documentaries and major investigative reports for both French and international broadcasters since 2002.

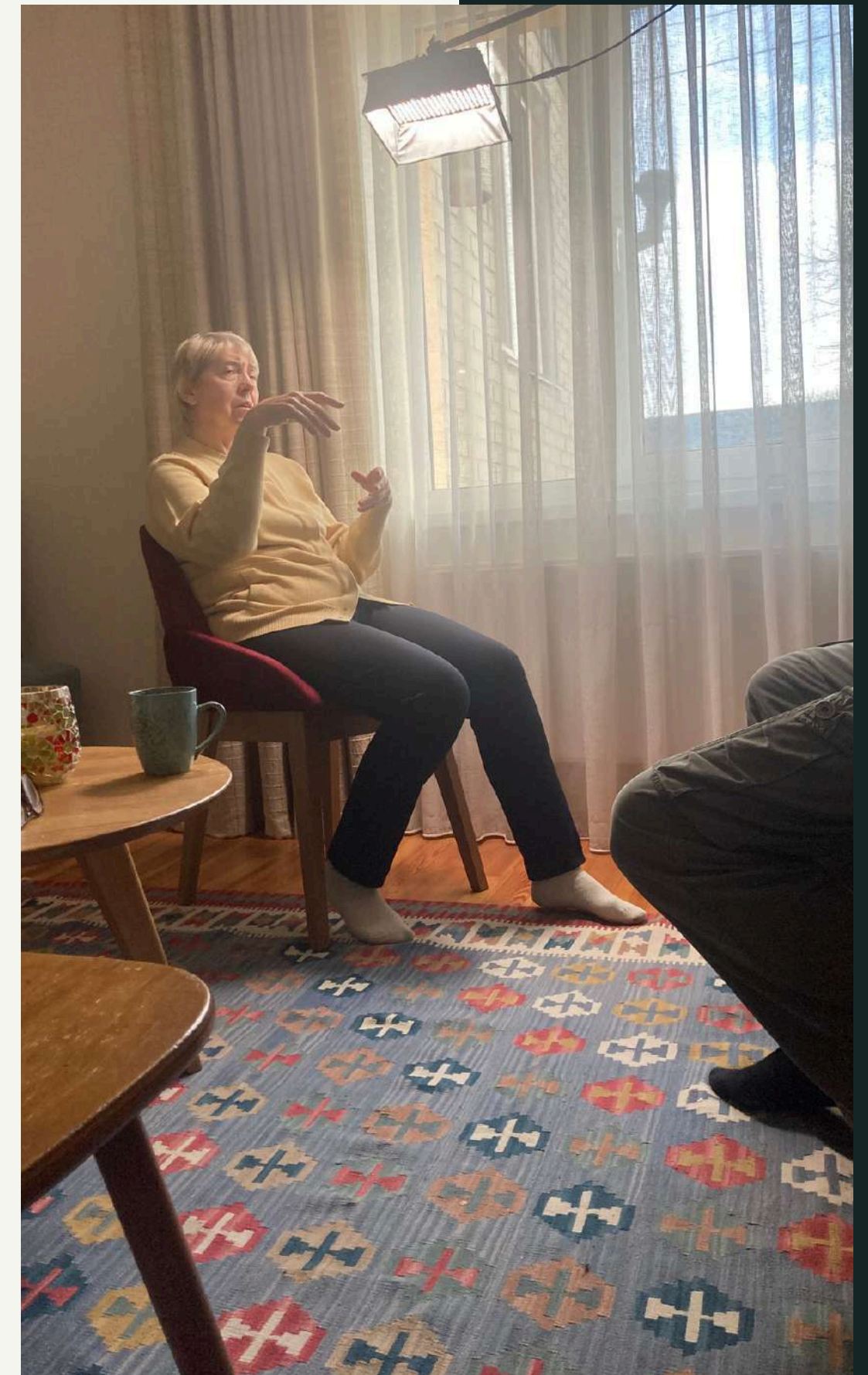
Hikari is a certified press agency, a member of USPA and Rhizom. The company is a signatory of both the Inclusive Business Charter and the Ecoprod Charter, and is committed to an active CSR approach, focusing on environmental responsibility, social inclusion, and representativeness in its productions.

Our work has been recognized and awarded in numerous French and international festivals — from FIGRA to the Human Rights Film Festival, including the Asian Film Festival and festivals in London.

Recent productions include:

- America at War by Pierre Haski, Farid Abdelouahab and Pascal Blanchard (2025 – ARTE)
- A Life's Ordeal: Michel Catalano vs. the Kouachi Brothers by Romain Verley (2025 – France 2)
- Armenia: Blood from the Mountains by Frédéric Tonolli (2025 – ARTE / Histoire TV)
- OQTF: Four Letters Dividing France by Bertrand Bolzinger (2025 – France 2)
- The Driver of Bucha by Mélanie Nunes (2025 – ARTE)
- Nicaragua: A Dictator vs. the Church by Antoine Boddaert (2024 – ARTE)
- René Dumont, Green Giant by Anne-Charlotte Gourraud (2024 – Wéo / LCP)
- The Bay of Reinette by Régis Croizier (2024 – Wéo)
- The Fall of the Ogre by Damien Fleurette (2023 – France 2)
- North Korea: A Plan for Survival by Minju Song (2023 – Public Sénat / ZDF)
- History, Money, Power: The Real Secrets of Puy du Fou by Raphaël Trésanini (2023 – France 2)
- The Shadows of Dora by Xavier-Marie Bonnot (2023 – Grand Lille TV / LCP)
- We Are Taiwan by Pierre Haski and Camille Le Pomellec (2023 – ARTE)
- Lamarck, the Scientist and the Visionary by Xavier-Marie Bonnot (2023 – France 3)
- The Red Princess by Pierre Haski (2023 – ARTE / RTS / RTBF)
- The Miracle Molecule by Frédéric Tonolli and Jeanne Blanquart (2022 – ARTE / Wéo)
- A Museum in the Making by François Cauwel (2022 – Grand Lille TV)
- My Wife Has Credit by Sébastien Le Belzic (2021 – LCP)
- Never Without My Daughter by Minju Song (2021 – Téva)
- The Children's Village by Jean-Sébastien Desbordes (2021 – France 2)

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Film Crew

DIRECTOR: MÉLANIE NUNES

CINEMATOGRAPHY: FRANÇOIS CAUWEL

EDITOR: JEANNE BUREAU

COLOR GRADING: LOUIS LAFONT

SOUND MIX: ROMAIN COLONNA D'ISTRIA

FIXERS: OLEKSANDRA ALEKSANDRENKO, SASHA

BEREZOVSKAYA

ASSISTANT EDITORS: HIPPOLYTE LATHIÈRE, MONA PANIEZ

PRODUCER: ANTHONY DUFOUR

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: FRÉDÉRIC LAFONT

HEAD OF PRODUCTION: NICOLAS WIART

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR: LOUISE POUCHOULON

GRAPHIC DESIGNER: LAURA ACQUAVIVA

An aerial photograph of a city street with a light-colored pavement. The word "hikari" is written in large, white, lowercase letters across the center of the image. The text is enclosed within a thin white rectangular border. In the background, several people are visible walking on the street, and a portion of a building's edge is visible on the right side.

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Thank You