

## Verleihung des KAIROS-Preises 2014

**Dankesrede von Jasmila Zbanic**  
*Preisträgerin 2014*

*Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

One of the strongest images in my memory is that of the day I was born.

It was snowing and the temperature was 15 degrees below Zero. My father couldn't start his Skoda. They had to wake up their neighbour and he took them to the hospital. I see my mum with her big belly going up the icy stairs, careful not to fall. Hospital walls and a broken window in the corridor. I see my mum on a bed and I feel her pain as she tries to deliver me for the next 10 hours. I see her face when she spots a big mark on my right leg, happy because nobody will be able to replace me with another baby. I see her beautiful face kissing me for the first time. And I see ME – the baby on a white lace pillow in my father's arms.

Of course I cannot remember this!

All the images I have are from the bedtime stories when, in the darkness of our bedroom, mum and dad had to answer their child's request:

“Tell me how I was born?”

“I told you last night.”

“Yes, but tell me again.”

Few years later my mum had put a huge effort in trying to persuade me that it was not possible for me to remember my own day of birth, because babies cannot see their own birth and most definitely not from the belly perspective.

It was then that I learnt about the power of storytelling in generating pictures and emotions. A story of events that I could not possibly remember became my own experience of time-travel. I saw the images my baby eyes could not have seen, I felt the cold, and I experienced the pain my brain could not have felt.

The birth episode was about me, but because my eyes were not developed and my cells were unable to memorise, somebody else had to tell me the story of myself - so I can comprehend my own experience and form the story of my own existence.

Stories that my parents whispered in my ear and songs they sang at night in a dark bedroom created a warm and exciting place in my soul, or wherever we store our emotions - I hear that voice which triggers my imagination.

From this darkness imagination grew, as a force of nature that made the child become a princess, a knight, a dwarf, a giant, a force that can give us empathy, new perspective, new feelings. This imagination was only mine, but later I would learn that it can be shared with lots of people.

When I go to a cinema and the lights turn off just before the film starts, I experience this moment of darkness that reminds me of these childhood nights. In this moment everything is possible. You know that you are ready to fly, to be a man, a woman, a child, an alien, an animal, to feel for them, cry, laugh and to leave the cinema with a new furniture in the room of your soul. This possibility of a narrative in the darkness still excites me.

When my country was in war – four years without electricity, food, gas, with constant bombing in the darkness of humankind, I was attending the Academy of performing arts in Sarajevo. For the following four years we did not have many opportunities to watch films in cinema or on VCR or Internet. Still, the darkness of these days did not stop us imagining films. We knew that, despite the destruction, the value of creation and sharing of stories was as important as bread and as our life.

Without stories our own lives would not have dignity and meaning. Without storytelling we would not be able to communicate at a deeper level, explain to other human beings how we feel, and feel that we are not alone. We would not be able to see the end of the war where it seems it would never end. To give hope and beauty where there was no hope and beauty.

Today's world is overloaded with pictures. We have them in our pockets, in our phones, we are sharing them instantly, and every event and every sensation is marked with Instagram. Pictures do connect us but the question remains: is the power of images greater or lesser because of the scores of pictures we are constantly dealing, always hungry for more. Do these pictures create stories and meanings, or do they create illusion and block our ability to imagine?

When working in film industry, you are faced with a demand that your imagination should be bankable. Bankable images have their own channels that are reaching every person on earth. Bankability means that images cannot challenge unless there is profit in it, cannot question if it jeopardises profit, they have to be nice and attractive to be safe to invest, or else we should be afraid, and out of this fear we should invest against something or somebody – in general they have to make us believe that what is good for profit, is good for us.

But there is imagination that can offer pictures beyond bankability. Imagination that is wild and powerful to move borders and love. Pictures more true to human beings, images which encourage us to see the world that is ambivalent, not only black or white, not only good or evil, but just as complicated as human beings, sad and funny at the same time. I would like to produce these kind of images because I feel they are able to tell the truth and move us, human beings, forward - closer to each other.

Thank you Toepfer Foundation for allowing me – with this award – to sink in my own imagination and to feel encouraged to share it with others. The KAIROS Prize is a unique award in the world and I am happy that the jury decided that a filmmaker can receive it acknowledging that film is not only entertainment but media that should have bigger reasonability for society.

I would also like to thank very special people who are in the room today: Professor Haris Pasovic who opened so many possibilities of imagination for me, my brother Kemal Zbanic who gives me love and who is always my strongest critic, Dieter Kosslick whose free spirit opened a door to underprivileged voices to be heard worldwide, Renate Rose and Mareen Gerisch from European Film Promotion for nominating me for this award, Ansgar Wimmer and Uta Gielke, the heart of this award, the jury members and Professor Christoph Stölzl for his speech, and last but not least, my daughter Zoe who is my light with her own unique imagination that I hope she will preserve and nourish, and Damir Ibrahimovic, my love, my producer, my supporter with whom I share my most important stories.

Thank you!