



76. Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin

Berlinale Perspectives

17

A film by
Kosara Mitić



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DECEMBER

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ART&POPCORN
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logline

Seventeen-year-old Sara hides a secret on a school trip. When the trip spirals out of control and Sara witnesses a classmate's sexual assault, she and the girl seal a bond that will last forever.

A photograph of two young women sitting at a table in a restaurant at night. The woman on the left is smiling and looking towards the woman on the right. The woman on the right is looking down with a serious expression. The background is filled with warm, bokeh lights from the restaurant's interior.

synopsis

Seventeen-year-old Sara is hiding a secret during a school trip. When the trip spirals out of control and she witnesses her friend Lina being sexually assaulted, the two girls try to break the cycle of casual violence. This seals an everlasting bond between them.

director's interview Kosara Mitić

The story of 17 is based on real events. What inspired you to tell this gripping story?

17 grew out of fragments of real event, but more importantly out of a shared emotional reality. I was struck by how easily certain experiences—especially those of young girls—are minimized, normalized, or pushed into silence. The story came from observing how institutions that are supposed to protect young people often end up protecting themselves instead. I wasn't interested in reconstructing a single true story, but in capturing a truth that many recognize instinctively, even if they've never spoken about it.

The school trip and its dynamics are going out of hand. Is this microcosm a metaphor for something bigger?

Yes, very much so. The school trip functions as a compressed version of society: hierarchies are intensified, rules become arbitrary, and power shifts into informal, often dangerous forms. Removed from their everyday environments, the characters are exposed—there's no real escape, no safe distance. This mirrors how social systems operate more broadly,

especially for young people and marginalized voices: you're told the rules exist for your safety, yet those same rules can trap you.

The film is set in the Balkans, often perceived as very traditional in terms of masculinity and religion resulting in taboos and trivialization of casual violence. Why do you think this is a universal topic?

While the Balkans provide a specific cultural and historical backdrop, the mechanisms at work are not unique. Patriarchal structures, the policing of female bodies, and the normalization of certain kinds of violence exist everywhere, just expressed differently. I think audiences across cultures recognize these patterns because they've lived with them—sometimes subtly, sometimes brutally. The setting grounds the story, but the emotions and conflicts transcend geography.



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Female solidarity in the film isn't idealized or presented as flawless—it's fragile, sometimes conflicted—but it's real.

Friendship and female solidarity are essential to the film. Is that your proposed way out of this?

I wouldn't call it a solution, but it is a form of resistance. Female solidarity in the film isn't idealized or presented as flawless—it's fragile, sometimes conflicted—but it's real. In environments where institutions fail, connection becomes a lifeline. The film suggests that being seen and believed by another person can be the first step toward reclaiming agency, even if it doesn't resolve everything.

It is somehow striking that you are not explicitly addressing abortion. Is that a reflection of patriarchal society?

Yes, in a way. The absence is intentional. The fact that abortion is not openly discussed reflects how patriarchal societies often erase certain options from the conversation altogether. Silence becomes a form of control. I wanted the audience to feel that absence—to sense the weight of what cannot be said, rather than being told directly.

What is also striking about 17 is the cinematography centering mainly on the main protagonist respectively reflecting her gaze on

the world. Can you explain how this aesthetic choice came about?

From the beginning, it was important that the film never objectifies her experience. The camera stays close, often at her eye level, sometimes even slightly behind her, so we discover the world as she does. This creates intimacy but also limitation—we only know what she knows, we only see what she sees. That subjectivity was crucial to avoid a voyeuristic perspective and instead align the audience emotionally with her inner state.

The end is very striking. Why did you choose to make it end in that particular way?

I wanted an ending that doesn't offer an easy closure. Real life rarely does. The final moment is less about resolution and more about transformation—something has shifted, even if we don't yet know what it will lead to. Ending the film there respects the complexity of the experience and leaves space for the audience to reflect, rather than comforting them with answers the story itself cannot honestly give.



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*Silence becomes
a form of control.*



director's biography

Kosara Mitić is a North Macedonian director and screenwriter who directed several short films, which screened in festivals around the world. Her debut feature film, **17**, was developed at Midpoint Feature Launch and presented and awarded for CineLink Work in Progress at the Sarajevo Film Festival. She is also an alumna of Berlinale Talents, a program supporting emerging filmmakers.

director's filmography

2013: *DROP BY SOMETIME* – Short Film

2015: *BIRTHDAY* – Short Film

2016: *THE RED ROOM* – Short Film

2026: *17* – Debut Feature Film – Berlinale Perspective



producers filmography



BLACK CAT PRODUCTION

Tomi Salkovski is a producer and founder of Skopje Film Studio. He has produced and coproduced more than thirty films, screened and awarded at the major festivals around the world. His recent filmography includes three-time winner of Sundance film festival **HIVE** by Blerta Basholi (2021), and **WOULD YOU LOOK AT HER** (2017) by Goran Stolevski, awarded for Best International Short Film at Sundance in 2018.



DECEMBER

DECEMBER is a Slovenian-based production company founded in 2013 by producers Vlado Bulajić and Lija Pogačnik. Their core mission is to develop and produce fiction and documentary films in collaboration with emerging and innovative directors and screenwriters with distinctive authorial voices. Their international co-productions include titles **FANTASY** by Kukla (Locarno Cineasti del Presente, 2025), **MOTHER MARA** (2024), **MOTHER MARA** by Mirjana Karanovic (2024), **SAFE PLACE** by Juraj Lerotić (Locarno Cineastie del Presente, 2022) and **THE DIARY OF DIANA B.** by Dvenik Diane Budisavljačić (2019).



ART&POPCORN

The ART&POPCORN Film Art Center was established in 2004 in Belgrade by a group of young filmmakers with the idea of producing films, it is now one of the one of the largest and most reliable Serbian film companies working with European partners led by Miroslav Mogorović and Stefan Mladenović. Their latest filmography includes, **SHORT SUMMER** by Nastia Korkia (Venice Lion of the Future Award), **NO ONE'S CHILD** by Vuk Ršumović (Venice Critic's Week, 2021), **DOVLATOV** by Aleksey German Jr. (Berlinale Official Competition, 2017), **THE HIGH SUN** by Dalibor Matanic (Cannes IFF, Un Certain Regard, 2015).



main cast

Sara

Eva Kostić

Lina

Martina Danilovska

Filip

Dame Joveski

crew

Screenplay Kosara Mitić
Ognjen Svilicic

Direction of photography Naum Doksevski

Editor Vladimir Pavlovski

Set designer Dejan Gjoshevski
Aleksandra Chevreska

Sound editing Igor Popovski
Julij Zornik

Costume Designer Zhaklina Krstevska Karagjozoska

Supported by

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Totem

is a Paris-based international sales and production company launched in 2019. We seek out talents that bring new perspectives. Films lead to emotions and emotions lead to reflection. We want films to travel and people to travel in film.

Totem Atelier

develops and produces early stage projects with a strong international potential.

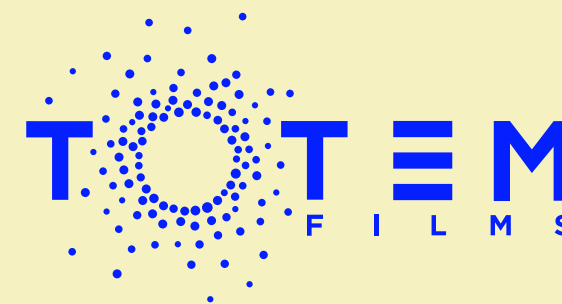
Totem Films

sells Totem Atelier productions worldwide and acquires handpicked feature films and documentaries for international distribution.

Selected filmography

TOTEM FILMS selected filmography includes among many others **COTTON QUEEN** by Suzannah Mirghani (Venice Settimana 2025), **DONKEY DAYS** by Rosanne Pel (Locarno Competition), **KIKA** by Alexe Poukine (Cannes Critics Week, 2025), **MEASURES FOR A FUNERAL** by Sofia Bohdanowicz (Toronto Centrepiece program 2024), **SUDAN, REMEMBER US** by Hind Meddeb (Venice – Giornate degli Autori 2024), **THE VILLAGE NEXT TO PARADISE** by Mo Harawe (Cannes Un Certain Regard 2024), **MY FAVOURITE CAKE** by Maryam Moghaddam & Behtash Sanaeaha (Berlinale Competition 2024), **CROSSING** by Levan Akin (Berlinale Panorama 2024), **BLACKBIRD BLACKBIRD BLACKBERRY** by Elene Naveriani (Cannes Directors Fortnight 2023), **THE HYPNOSIS** by Ernst de Geer (Karlovy Vary 2023), **SLOW** by Marija Kavtaradze (Sundance 2023), Juho Kuosmanen's **COMPARTMENT N°6** (Cannes 2021 Competition – Grand Prix) **WE** by Alice Diop (Berlinale Documentary Award 2021).

TOTEM ATELIER filmography includes **SHORT SUMMER** by Nastia Korkia (Venice 2025, Lion of the Future Award), **THE HYPNOSIS** by Ernst de Geer (Karlovy Vary 2023 - Best Actor, Fipresci Jury Award, and Europa Cinemas Label), **DEAD GIRLS DANCING** by Anna Roller (Tribeca 2023), **MARCELI** by Jasmine Trinca (Cannes Official Selection 2022).



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