

TWO MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT

A film by Yael Bartana



SYNOPSIS

A group of actors gather on a stage, ready for their performance. They are playing the all-female government of an imaginary nation. In light of the looming threat posed by an enemy country which is increasing its nuclear stockpiles, the government assembles in its Peace Room—so named as an inversion of Dr. Strangelove's War Room, because here peace is preferable to war. In deciding how to respond, and in considering whether to proceed with their plans for unilateral disarmament, the government consults with female experts—real-life specialists, defence advisers, soldiers, lawyers, peace activists, humanitarians and politicians—who join the actors on stage.

As the women exchange ideas about war, security, and inequality, their discussion ranges across the global emergencies of our male-dominated reality, with climate change, toxic masculinity and the nuclear arms race rising to the fore. As they strive to reimagine international gender paradigms, tensions escalate with the enemy nation—the country's leader is a man obsessed with the size of his

rocket, and he seems determined to prove to the world that his big red button really does work.

Two Minutes to Midnight is the final stage of a four year transdisciplinary series by Yael Bartana. Incorporating footage recorded at experimental public performances in Aarhus, Berlin and Philadelphia, it presents a filmic synthesis of the series' ideas, images and actions. By placing real-life participants within a fictional environment, and mixing scripted material with improvised discussions, the project explores what would happen if countries around the world were governed by women.

Foreshadowing the real-life study that COVID-19 provided for this inquiry, the work examines the impact that female-led governments would have on the way that international crises are resolved, seeking to answer the ever-so pertinent question that forms the title of Bartana's series: 'What if Women Ruled the World?'





ACTORS



Olwen Fouéré
President

Actor and director who works internationally in English and French. Her acclaimed adaptation and performance of *riverrun*, the voice of the river from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, has received numerous awards including the Edinburgh Herald Archangel Award 2014 and The Stage Award. Other recent stage work includes her production of *Lessness* by Samuel Beckett at the Barbican International Beckett Festival in June 2015 and Galway International Arts Festival 2015 ; her translation and production of *Danse, Morob* by Laurent Gaudé which premiered at Project Arts Centre, Dublin, in January 2017 and her appearance in *Salome* written and directed by Yael Farber at the National Theatre, London in May 2017.



Anat Saragusti
Vice-President

Journalist, commentator and human-rights activist. In 2016 she was awarded the *Unsung Hero* Drum Major for Justice Award for “exceptional global leadership, commitment to the elevation of humankind through advocacy and awareness”. A well-known news reporter, Saragusti worked at the Israeli TV Channel 2 News where she reported from Gaza and was Evening News Editor and editor of the Friday magazine. A peace activist and human rights advocate, Saragusti is the former executive director of Agenda, Center for Strategic Communication and served as the director of B'Tselem USA.



Samira Saraya – State Secretary

Acclaimed television, movie and theatre actress. Known most for *Self Made* (2014), *Minimum Wage* (2012) and *Longing* (2017). Samira was the winner of a special mention for a unique acting at Acre Festival for alternative theatre 2012, Winner supporting actress at the Fringe Theater awards for 2015, and a Winner of the best actress award in the 2017 JFF (Jerusalem Film Festival). A feminist and activist, and cofounder of Aswat (Palestinian Gay Women), Samira was born and raised in Halifa in north Israel, and has for the last 20 years, lived in Tel-Aviv and holds a Bachelor's degree in nursing.



Jo Martin – Peace Secretary

English actress and writer who has taken part in different theatre pieces, television and film productions. Her theatre credits include: *The Westbridge* (Royal Court Theatre); *The Other Place* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *Doubt a Parable* (Southwark Playhouse); *Trade* (The Young Vic); *The Rolling Stone* (Orange Tree). Her film credits include: *The Murder of Stephen Lawrence*, *A Hundred Streets*, *Chalet Girl* and *Batman Begins*. Her writing credits include the play *Shoot Win* (Theatre Royal Stratford East/West Yorkshire Playhouse/Cherry Lane Theatre New York), *Airport* (BBC Radio 4) as well as for critically acclaimed BBC sketch show *The Real McCoy*.



Alix Wilton Regan – Army Chief of Staff

Award winning, multi lingual, British actress and voice-over artist who trained at the Drama Studio London. Alix's work has included the role of Susannah Castleman in feature film *The Wife* opposite Glenn Close and Jonathan Pryce (as her parents) which recently premiered at TIFF 2017, and Dr Kimberley Wells in NBC's primetime TV show *The Brave* opposite Anne Heche and Mike Vogel. She recently completed filming of the performance-captured lead female role of Aya in hit video game *Assassins Creed: Origins* and often works in gaming, at the forefront of this evolving technology. Alix also founded and runs a charitable initiative called *Play 4 Calais & Beyond* in December 2015, which provides hands on support to asylum seekers and refugees in Calais (France), the UK and beyond.

EXPERTS



Dr. Sarai Aharoni

Feminist scholar and activist

Sophia Besch

EU common security policy
and European defence industry integration
expert

Naila Bozo

Editor of the Alliance for Kurdish Rights

Dr. Tarja Cronberg

Former Chair of the Iran delegation in the
European Parliament

Dr. Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen

Director of the Institute for Strategy, Royal
Danish Defence College

Reem Fadda

Independent curator and art historian

Dr. Patricia Flor

Ambassador of the European Union to Japan
and former German Commissioner for
Disarmament and Arms Control

Bana Gora

CEO of the Muslim Women's Council

Kübra Gümüşay

Political scientist and journalist

Xanthe Hall

International Disarmament Campaigner, ICAN
(Nobel Peace Prize 2017)

Birgitta Jónsdóttir

Icelandic politician, anarchist, poet and
activist

Heather Linebaugh
Former US Air Force drone operator

Lisa Ling
Former US Air Force drone operator

Dr. Carina Ann Meyn
National security strategy expert

Christine Muttonen
Former President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Camilla Tenna Nørup Sørensen
Superpower diplomacy expert

Paula Peters
Vice President at the international petition platform Change.org

Irena Sabic
Human rights lawyer

Jelia Sane
International and human rights lawyer

Lone Træholt
Denmark's first female military general

Dr. Beyza Unal
Nuclear policy, cyber and space security expert

Virginia Wangare Greiner
Social worker and campaigner for migrant women's rights

Dr. Anja Van Der Hulst
Senior Scientist Wargaming

Dr. Christina von Braun
Cultural anthropologist, writer and filmmaker

Dr. Carmen Wunderlich
International relations scientist

May Zeidani
Social scientist and activist

CREDITS



Germany / The Netherlands
2021 | DCP | 1:1.85 | 5.1 Mix | 47 Min

Original version:
English with English subtitles

Produced by MY-I Productions and Ingenue Productions in co-production with Flaneur Films and rbb in collaboration with ARTE, funding provided by Mondriaan Fund, Amsterdam, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, The Philip and Muriel Berman Foundation, and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.

Viewing link:
<https://vimeo.com/512184663>
Password: 2min2mid

What if Women Ruled the World? (2017-2018) was commissioned and produced as a live project by Manchester International Festival, European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017 and Volksbühne Berlin.

Additional footage was shot during the live performance *Bury Our Weapons, Not Our Bodies* in Philadelphia in 2018.

Producers
Yael Bartana
Naama Pyritz

Executive Producer live performance
Jo Paton

Associate Director live performance
Camilla Nielsson

Expert Associate
Phoebe Greenwood

Co-Producer Germany
Zsuzsanna Király

Post Production Producer
Anja Lindner

Director of Photography
Uri Ackerman

Cinematographers
Sophie Winqvist
Agnesh Pakozdi
Matan Radin
Claudia Schröder

Editor

Yael Bartana

Additional Editors

Ayelet Gil
Michal Oppenheim
Daphna Keenan

Sound Design

Daniel Meir

Color Grading

Simon Veroneg

Story Consultants

Itamar Gov
Mille Haynes

Set Design

Saygel & Schreiber

Wardrobe Supervisor

Shanti Freed

Additional footage:

Director

Yael Bartana

Producer

Naama Pyritz

Director of Photography

Itai Neeman

Second Unit Director of Photography

Mick van Rossum

Choreographers

Ruti Sela and Mor Bashan
from the Noa Eshkol Chamber Dance Group

Costume Designer

Yael Shenberger

Art Director

Shmuel Ben Shalom

BIOGRAPHY Yael BARTANA



Yael Bartana (born Israel, 1970) is an observer of the contemporary and a pre-enactor. She employs art as a scalpel inside the mechanisms of power structures and navigates the fine and crackled line between the sociological and the imagination. Over the past twenty years, she has dealt with some of the dark dreams of the collective unconscious and reactivated the collective imagination, dissected group identities and (an-)aesthetic means of persuasion. In her films, installations, photographs, staged performances and public monuments Yael Bartana investigates subjects like national identity, trauma, and displacement, often through ceremonies, memorials, public rituals and collective gatherings.

Her work has been exhibited worldwide, and is represented in the collections of many museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Tate Modern, London; and the Centre Pompidou, Paris. She currently lives and works in Berlin and Amsterdam.

Selection of Solo Exhibitions: Jewish Museum Berlin (2021); Fondazione Modena Arti Visive (2019/2020); Philadelphia Museum of Art (2018); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2015); Secession, Vienna (2012); Tel Aviv Museum of Art (2012); Moderna Museet, Malmö (2010); MoMA PS1, NY (2008). Selection of Group Exhibitions: São Paulo Biennial (2014, 2010, 2006); Berlin Biennial (2012); documenta 12 (2007); Istanbul Biennial (2005), Manifesta 4 (2002). She won the Artes Mundi 4 Prize (2010) and the trilogy *And Europe Will Be Stunned* was ranked as the 9th most important art work of the 21st century by the Guardian newspaper (2019).

Yael Bartana is represented by:
Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam
Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv
Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milano
Petzel Gallery, New York
Capitain Petzel, Berlin

Photo by Birgit Kaulfuss

FILMOGRAPHY

Yael Bartana

- 2021 *Malka Germania (Queen Germania)*,
director and editor
Two Minutes to Midnight,
director and editor
- 2019 *The Undertaker*, director and editor
- 2015 *Tashlikh (Cast Off)*,
director and editor
- 2014 *Pardes (Orchard)*, director, camera
and editor
True Finn, director
- 2013 *Inferno*, director and editor
- 2011 *Zamach (Assassination)*,
director and editor
- 2010 *The Recorder Player from Sheikh
Jarrah*, director, camera and editor
Entartete Kunst Lebt,
director and editor
- 2009 *Mur i wieza (Wall and Tower)*,
director and editor
- 2007 *Mary Koszmary (Nightmares)*,
director and editor
Summer Camp, director and editor
- 2006 *A Declaration*, director and editor
- 2005 *Odds and Ends*, director and editor
Wild Seeds, director, camera and
editor
Sirens Song, director and editor
- 2004 *You Could Be Lucky*,
director, camera and editor
Low Relief II (I),
director, camera and editor
- 2003 *When Adar Enters*,
director, camera and editor
Ad De'lo Yoda,
director, camera and editor
Freedom Border,
director, camera and editor
Kings of the Hill,
director, camera and editor
- 2001 *Trembling Time*,
director, camera and editor
- 2000 *Profile*, director, camera and editor