

DRACULA'S True Story

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Directed by Jacques Plaisant & Matteo Caranta
Produced by Tournez s'il vous plaît & ARTE France

52' & 90'

SYNOPSIS

Everyone knows Dracula, but who knows that behind the vampire lies a 15th century Romanian prince? A notoriously bloodthirsty monster who served as a pivot between the Christian West and the Muslim East. Recent research takes us back to the origins of globalization, in a story that, from France to Italy, to Turkey, to Austria, to England, all the way to Romania, echoes our contemporary concerns.

In June 1456, Halley's Comet appeared in Europe and was seen as a bad omen. Everywhere on the planet, it was seen as the sign of an impending apocalypse. Everywhere that is, except in Transylvania. A prince named Vlad Dracula, used this celestial symbol to take over the throne of Wallachia by force. His reign, marked by betrayal and brutal executions, earned him the nickname of Vlad the Impaler. His contemporaries often compared him to some of history's greatest tyrants: Herod, Caligula and Nero. His legend inspired Bram Stoker's vampire character as well as Romanian dictator Ceaușescu who drew inspiration from him to claim his legacy. This story then elevated him to the status of a national hero in Romania. Where does the truth lie? Where does the myth begin? For many years, historians have been questioning the story of Vlad III also known as Prince Dracula. All across Europe, they have gathered documents and information about him and compiled them under the name "Corpus Draculianum". Personal, diplomatic, and commercial correspondence; negotiation records; administrative documents, narrative and iconographic sources; coins and official seals - these sources all tell the story of a prince whose fate rivals with that of a Shakespearian character but above all, they place him at the heart of a major turning point in European history.



VLAD III. THE BOY KING OF HUNGARY & POLAND
out stirring, was the reign of this youthful monarch. He was
fifteen years of age when, in 1440, a Hungarian embassy
g in Poland, offered him the throne of his late father, Vladislaus.
ghting against the Turks, the young king fell at Varna in 1444.
F&T 000 01193

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Though Vlad III of Wallachia, also known as Vlad the Impaler or Dracula, may initially seem to be nothing more than a macabre figure associated with gruesome torture, his life reveals much more than historical curiosity: it embodies the major political, religious, and cultural issues of the 15th century. Prince of a territory that served as a buffer between Islam and Christianity, he witnessed the last crusade, the fall of Constantinople, and the passage of Halley's Comet. A prisoner and then an advisor to the King of Hungary, he was both declared a traitor to the Christian faith and made a defender of Christianity by Pope Pius II. Unwittingly, he also became the first political subject of European printing. His legend was forged through the earliest printed books—a mix of myth and propaganda. His story sheds light on contemporary Europe, especially on the tensions in the East, European identity, and the historical memory of countries like Romania. In addition to its historical interest, the legend of Dracula offers a captivating narrative, combining family tragedy, power struggles, conspiracies, and spectacular landscapes. This rich narrative inspired the creation of a television documentary project to follow not only the vampire, but also the man he was and the world he lived in.



This film is a journey between two worlds: the East and the West, Christianity and Islam, history and imagination. To explore the life and story of Vlad the Impaler is to cross geographic, cultural and emotional borders where historic reality and ancestral fears mingle. The storyline mixes geopolitical rigor and immersion in darker and more disturbing worlds.

A TIMELESS GEOGRAPHY

The landscapes of Transylvania, with their mist, forests, and mountains, bring to mind a forgotten Middle Age period and fuel our imagination. The film will highlight these natural settings through lighting, drone footage, and desaturated color grading to create a mysterious atmosphere that combines history and poetry.

REDISCOVERING DRACULA'S STORY

The places walked by Vlad Dracula—castles, towns, and battlefields—will be approached as time capsules. Each site will evoke a key stage in his life through an off-camera commentary, interviews, and soundscapes, reinforcing the evocative power of the narrative and the violence of the character.



A DIVIDED EUROPE

The story of Vlad Dracula will serve as a gateway to the geopolitics of the 15th century, when Wallachia played a central role between the Christian West and the Muslim East. A dynamic cartography will illustrate these upheavals, particularly the power shift being put back toward the West. A visual display inspired by the game of chess will represent the major political clashes between the powers of the time, making the issues clear and visually compelling.

HOW CAN WE SHOW WHAT CAN'T BE SHOWN?

Words—Vlad's letters and contemporary accounts—will be the key to entering the world of his cruelty and will be supported by an immersive soundtrack. To compensate for the lack of historical footage, fictional scenes will be created using rotoscope animation, a stylized design technique. This artistic approach will allow violence to be represented visually without raw realism, with strong visual unity and the symbolic narrative use of the color red.

ROTSCOPE ANIMATION TESTS



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Joséphine LETANG

**Head of International Distribution &
Marketing**

j-letang@arteFrance.fr



Alec HERRMANN

Head of Acquisitions

a-herrmann@arteFrance.fr



Audrey KAMGA

a-kamga@arteFrance.fr

Sales Manager

Canada, USA, South America & MENA Region



Alexandra MARGUERITE

a-marguerite@arteFrance.fr

Sales Manager

UK, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Eastern
Europe, Asia, language versions

Africa: a-morel@arteFrance.fr



Franka SCHWABE

f-schwabe@arteFrance.fr

Sales Manager

Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland,
Netherlands, Scandinavia, Iceland, Australia, New Zealand