

# DEPARTEMENT CULTUUR, JEUGD & MEDIA

ULTIMAS 2016  
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## Ultima 2016 Film Pieter-Jan De Pue

Over the past 7 years, Pieter-Jan De Pue has worked steadily on an impressive debut: 'The Land of the Enlightened'.

Born of a passion, on the sidelines, 'The Land of the Enlightened' grew throughout its production process into a monumental film. Monumental in its objective, its locations, its theme but above all in its thinking. How do you make a film about such a big issue as the war in Afghanistan? 'The Land of the Enlightened' is a film in which the war almost becomes a footnote, but which also says something about every war. This is a film-maker who doesn't shy away from danger, and who managed to avoid the pitfalls involved in this type of film.

The Land of the Enlightened is also striking due to its hybrid form: it is not a fiction nor a documentary, it is first and foremost cinema. Just like his short film 'O', this is clearly a film with a unique signature, seen through a photographer's lens.

Pieter-Jan De Pue is a film-maker with a fighting spirit and courage who is 100% committed. He immersed himself in the location for a long time, learnt the local dialect and continued returning to Afghanistan, even putting his own life at risk. Through his commitment and endless patience, he managed to kindle enthusiasm in the people around him for a long period: his team, his producers, his characters but also the audience, festival programmers and distributors.

With an impressive film, he also took an impressive approach. After the world premieres at major international festivals like Sundance and Rotterdam, he accompanied his film around the world from festival to festival for a whole year. He then brought the film back to his leading character Gholam Nasir and his gang of children with an open-air screening in the mountains of Wakhan, Afghanistan.

This Ultima prize commends Pieter-Jan's passion, his perseverance and uncompromising resolve, his commitment and his generosity. Without passionate film-makers, there is no film industry.

In 2016 Pieter-Jan De Pue regularly missed out on the big awards (European Film Awards, the Ensor for best documentary, Magritte for the best Flemish Film). With this Ultima, his work is finally being rewarded in Belgium too. Today De Pue is at the start of a promising international career. This award aims to encourage him to take an equally ambitious and impressive approach with his next film.