

Darja Bajagić
The Dawn of Day
April 24 - May 25, 2026

The Dawn of Day, 2020
Video
23:45 min
Sound by Fifth Era, Ferro Mortem and Die Kombination

For *The Dawn of Day* Bajagić collaborated with three musical artists on the video's soundtrack:

Fifth Era

Fifth Era originated in the '90s in Blansko/Brno in the Czech Republic. Its name is often abbreviated as "FE" or "65." The main style the project focuses on, doomcore, is a slow, morbid form of hardcore techno with pounding drum patterns and strong links to European techno sounds and UK dark breakbeat tracks from the early '90s.

Ferro Mortem

Chicago-based power electronics outfit featuring Oliver Vereker, James Moy Omar Gonzalez, and Jacob Dubois.

Die Kombination

Die Kombination (engl. "the combination") derives its name from the 1930s crime group "Murder, Inc.," also known as "the Combination." Influenced by early Italian death industrial and power electronics, the project centers on death—as part of life and its philosophical ambiguity. These ambiguities emerge in Die Kombination's works through twisted meanings, morals, and senses, ideally inducing a state of derealization.

Scavengers

Barthes likened a photograph to a child pointing his finger at something and saying “that.” It is the “absolute Particular,” tearing out from the world, partializing it, presenting itself as a testimony to a singular, frozen moment: “here it is”, or rather, “once it was,” since the photograph cannot account for anything before or after its time. For Benjamin, the age of the photograph meant the end of the age of storytelling, of narratable time. In its place, the experience of shock, temporal displacement between the event and its memory. In photographs, we always arrive too late, to pick over the bones like scavengers.

So what is the “that” of Darja Bajagić’s *The Dawn of Day* (2020)? For one, we are not looking at an image or even a series of images but a montage, a hybrid form between still and moving images, which both flattens time and reorients it. The images we see in *The Dawn of Day* are unmistakably of war, or conflict—plumes of smoke, ruined buildings, blood-stained clothes which could belong to any era. Unlike the images that appear before us daily, these war photographs float by unmoored from the frozen moment. Repurposed as they are, they fail photojournalism’s prime directive to bear witness. We see but are not allowed to linger or understand. One horror begets the next. Whose bodies have been mutilated? Whose churches have been destroyed?

Bajagić’s methods demonstrate the futility of such questions. Through the physical act of scanning, she has rendered these images in extreme close-up: for every identifiable body or landscape, there are images of pure abstraction. A disconnect has formed between the technological function of the scanner, with its archival precision oriented towards longevity and accuracy, and the actual effect, one which suggests but cannot name, which pulls closer and closer until the particles break down into illegibility, exploded into fine, grainy shapes. A paradox emerges: the nearer we draw, the less we know. Whereas in cinema, the traditional close-up signified the viewer’s ability to penetrate into the psyche—it is the heart, not the eye, that has perceived them, as Béla Balázs wrote—Bajagić’s close-ups foreclose this possibility. The title *The Dawn of Day* implies a revelation, a moment of brightness that illuminates what had once been hidden. If the purpose of war photography is to document, what does it mean when it is no longer legible? When nothing is revealed in the light of dawn? Is this a desecration of the image?

In Christian belief, to consecrate is to make bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. To desecrate is a contraction of de-consecrate; essentially, to turn what was real back into mere symbol. We have spent the past century living in the age of photographic truth. But the trick of photography has always been to collapse the sign into the referent. Scanning, montage and close-up do not pervert this truth but reveal its artificiality. We live now in the age of the deepfake and the crisis actor. When Sontag wrung her hands over the pain of others, she warned of the way a single image may be propagandized by opposing forces. But her arguments assume a shared reality. What if we can’t agree on what we are looking at? What if nothing can dislodge the shock that reaches us well before the facts do? The event is not experienced consciously; it remains unintegrated into semantic memory. Here truth does not converge onto an image but leaks out of it.

– Kevin Champoux