

PRESS KIT

Short Film

A coproduction Senegal - France
Produced by Astou Production & Bandini Films

ASTOU PRODUCTION

Souleymane Kebe +221 77 562 78 59 - jskebe@yahoo.fr
Maud Leclair-Névé +336 82 55 10 21 - mleclair@lachauvesouris.eu

BANDINI FILMS

Rafael Andrea Soatto +336 08 05 86 88 - rafael@bandinifilms.com
Laëtitia Denis +336 07 21 84 31 - laetitia@bandinifilms.com

RHODE ISLAND
BREAKING BOUNDARIES
GRAND PRIZE
BALINALE
BEST SHORT
NARRATIVE

CLERMONT-FERRAND
FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS
GRAND PRIZE
FLICKERFEST
BEST EUROPEAN
SHORT FILM

THE BOY WITH WHITE SKIN

A FILM BY SIMON PANAY



WRITER & DIRECTOR SIMON PANAY DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON GOUFFAULT SOUND OPERATOR OUSMANE COLY
1st ASSISTANT DIRECTOR LASSINA KONE CASTING IMAN DIJONNE SET DESIGNER OUMAR SALL COSTUMES ADAMA DIOP EDITOR SIMON PANAY
SOUND EDITING VIVIEN ROCHE SOUND MIXER REGIS DIEBOLD MUSIC COMPOSER PHILIPPE FIVET DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION ASSANE DIAGNE
PRODUCED BY LAETITIA DENIS, RAFAEL ANDREA SOATTO, KEVIN ROUSSEAU, SOULEYMANE KEBE, MAUD LECLAIR NEVE
WITH THE SUPPORT OF LA REGION GRAND EST, DU CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINEMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMEE
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF FRANCE TELEVISIONS & PROCIREP ANGOA

Synopsis

Entrusted by his father to a group of gold-miners, an albino child embodies all of their hopes.



Tenkoto Gold Mine



The Boy with White Skin

Simon Panay



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

SIMON PANAY

Gold mines are places of myth, where the line between reality and legend dissolves. Gold is a Beast—one that must be hunted, tracked, and confronted in a deadly duel before it can be claimed.

During my documentary immersion, I witnessed the ritual that would later give birth to this film: the use of albino children, sent underground to sing. I was not permitted to film it—there was a fear that the spell would be broken. This film is as much a piece of reality as it is a dream, a personal vision of a world I have been capturing for twelve years, one that fascinates me as deeply as it unsettles me.



ASTOU PRODUCTION / BANDINI FILMS



Interview

You've been making documentaries in West Africa for thirteen years. How did that experience shape your approach to fiction?

I started making documentaries in Burkina Faso when I was eighteen, and since then, I've never really left West Africa. That's where I learned how to make films—especially working alongside documentarians like Souleymane Drabo, to whom I owe a lot. I spent a large part of my adult life in Burkina, which I consider my second home.

It's also where I first discovered the world of artisanal gold mining—a fascinating universe in which I had already shot two films: *Nobody Dies Here* in Benin, and later *If You Are a Man*, a feature-length documentary filmed over two years in the Perkoa mine in Burkina Faso. There, the line between the real and the mythological is thin. Gold is seen as a Beast you have to track, hunt, and which won't be captured without a deadly duel. That mythology deeply marked me.

And it's in that world that you discovered the unique status of albino children?

Yes, during the shoot of *If You Are a Man*, I witnessed two rituals that I wasn't allowed to film: albino children being lowered into the mine shafts and asked to sing. There was a fear that the presence of a camera would break the spell.

In some mining-related beliefs, albinos are seen as divine beings, capable of attracting wealth and luck. It's the complete opposite of how they're viewed in the rest of West African society (and in East Africa too, for that matter), where they're often seen as bad omens. Many are killed at birth; others live in constant fear of being kidnapped, tortured, or even sold in pieces for supposed magical powers.

How did you find the young lead actor, Boubacar Dembélé?

The casting process was a real challenge. We organized it in Senegal, in collaboration with the albino association. It happened during the presidential campaign—a particularly sensitive time. There's a widespread belief that to win an election, you have to sacrifice the most albinos. Whether true or not, that fear is deeply rooted. During that period, albino children are extremely protected. So it was very difficult to gain families' trust.

Then we met Boubacar. An incredible stroke of luck. He's a bright, determined, radiant boy. Probably the happiest child I've ever met. He even told us he doesn't know fear or sadness. Which tells you how much effort it took for him to portray those emotions on screen. But despite the challenges of the shoot, he was always the sunshine on set.



Interview

The film includes some striking underground mine scenes.

How did you pull those off?

That was the main technical challenge: how do you film underground tunnels without risking the safety of the crew and actors? When I was making documentaries, I would go down alone with a camera. But that wasn't an option here. We considered shooting in a studio, but artistically and financially, it wasn't viable.

After two months of searching, we finally found a cave on Gorée Island. Our production designer, Oumar Sall, and his team did an extraordinary job: walls weathered by hand, water seepage recreated using hidden pipes drawing from the nearby ocean, non-toxic fake dust imported from Paris... Every detail was carefully crafted. We wanted total immersion.

The film has a very particular, almost sensory visual atmosphere.

How did you work with light?

With Simon Gouffault, the film's cinematographer, we immediately agreed on a core rule: to use only "motivated" sources. Every element had to exist within the frame and make sense in the story world. So we worked only with flashlights, oil lamps... Each fixture was carefully designed with the props and art departments to ensure it was both meaningful and sufficient.

It was a constraint, but also a way to stay close to reality—to make the audience feel the mine world as it truly is, with its shadows, flickering lights, and its mystery. That choice also gave the image a very unique texture. The light no longer directs the viewer's gaze or reveals everything—it creates uncertainty, space for the imagination.

What did you want to express with this film?

I conceived the film like a dream—or a nightmare. There's a unity of time, or at least the illusion of one. We move through worlds without always understanding them. The viewer knows no more than the child: Why has his father brought him here? Why is he asked to sing? Why is he adored? Why does his father disappear? People often ask: "Where did the father go? Did he abandon him?" I answer: I don't know. The child doesn't know. You don't know. Neither do I.

The shoot was also disrupted by the political situation in Senegal...

Yes, the presidential election was cancelled just before we began filming. One of the main opposition figures was in prison, youth protests erupted, and there were barricades, internet blackouts, and tensions everywhere. We were supposed to shoot at the Tenkoto gold mine, a highly sensitive location often plagued by trafficking. The gendarmerie had agreed to accompany us, but pulled out due to the instability. We then had to rely on the informal security service of the mining site. The crew was staying two hours away by dirt road. Fifteen minutes after our convoy passed one day, a truck was attacked and three passengers were killed. We never found out if it had originally been our gear truck that was targeted. Together with the producers, we made the decision to stop, even though we still had the end of the film to shoot. We gathered the team and explained the situation. Everyone spoke. Every single one of them wanted to continue—to finish what we had started. Some said they felt like they were making an important film. It was a moment of unity I'll never forget.

What's your view of artisanal gold mining?

To me, they are open-air prisons. Traps. Young people go there with hopes of striking it rich overnight. There are always success stories being told—but those are often spread by the bosses to attract labor. The system is cruel: the boss keeps half of whatever is found. The other half is divided among the miners—who work with no salary. They go into debt just to eat, and little by little, the trap closes. The longer you stay, the more you sacrifice—your health, your money, your friends. And the harder it becomes to leave. Because the gold might be right there, just beneath your feet. Maybe tomorrow. So you stay. Often until death.

Your film depicts a harsh, sometimes brutal world, but without condemning it outright.

What's your stance toward that reality? Is this a critical gaze?

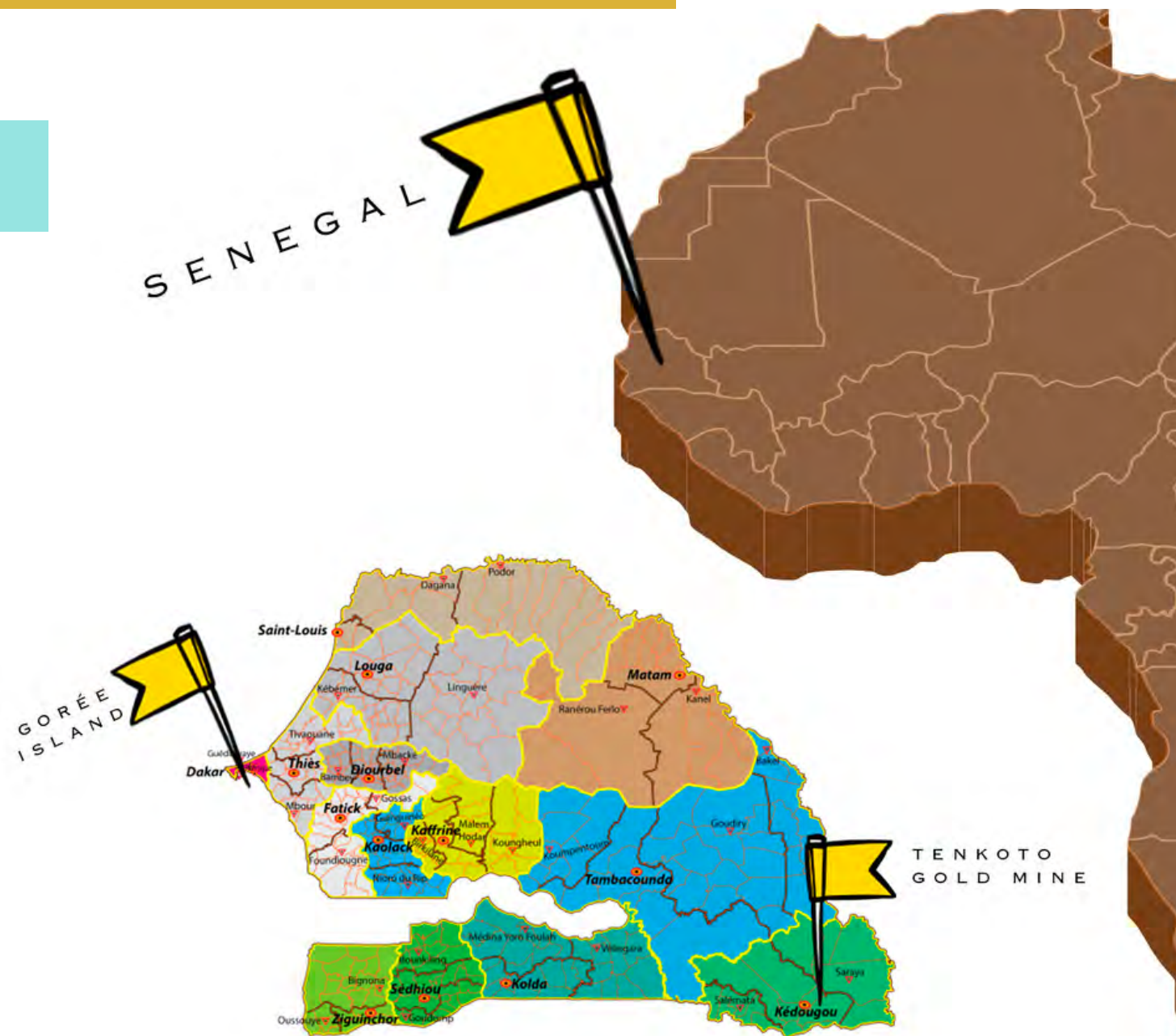
The film naturally carries a form of critique, but it's not a militant or accusatory denunciation. I don't feel entitled to judge or condemn a world I'm not part of—where I don't live the daily choices and constraints. My role is to observe, to tell, to make people feel—not to point fingers. I believe morality often distorts these realities.

What I aim to show is complexity. Artisanal mines are violent, unstable spaces, shaped by economic domination, exploitation, and sometimes brutal beliefs. But they're also places of hope, solidarity, resourcefulness, and dreams. For some, it's a dead end. For others, it's the only possible path. In this world, no one is entirely innocent, but no one is fully guilty either. I wanted to reflect that ambivalence in the film.



GEOGRAPHY

THE BOY WITH WHITE SKIN

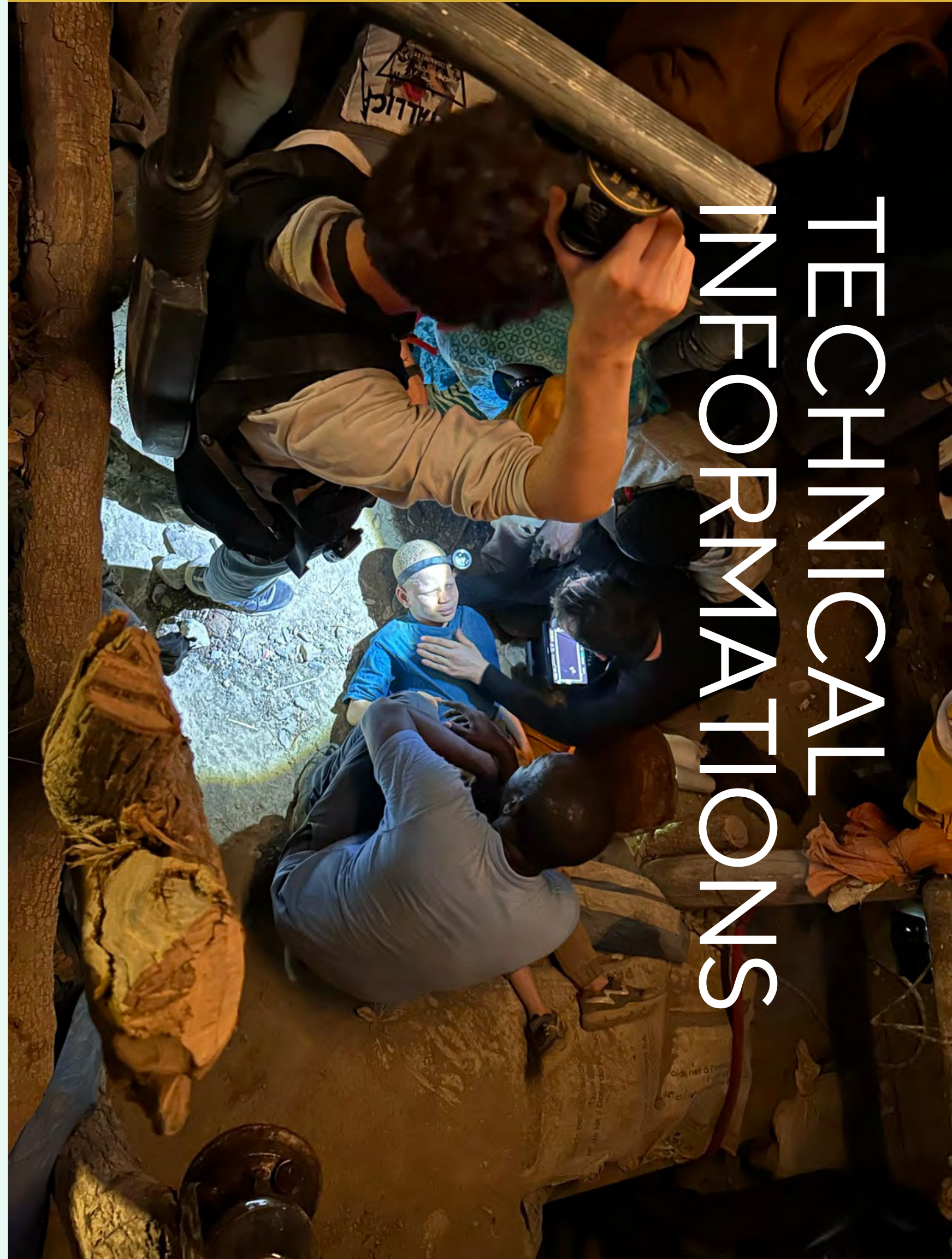


- Director: Simon Panay
- Writer: Simon Panay
- Producers: Rafael Andrea Soatto
Laëtitia Denis
Souleymane Kébé
Maud Leclair-Névé

- Runtime: 14min
- Year: 2024
- Country: Senegal, France
- Visa: 158.721

- Link: [movielink](#)
- Pass: Bandini_2024

- Casting:
 - Issa Aboubacar Dembele
 - Alassane Moussa Thiam
 - Général Alassane Diaw
 - Soumeymane Amadou Galo
 - Colonel Serigne Wadane Ndiaye



TECHNICAL INFORMATION



INTERNATIONAL SALES
MANIFEST

ANAIS COLPIN

anais@manifest.pictures

+33766972964

PRODUCTION COMPANY



contact@bandinifilms.com

A S T O U
P R O D U C T I O N

jskebe@yahoo.fr