



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
COMPETITION
2023 OFFICIAL SELECTION

LAST SUMMER

a film by
Catherine Breillat

SBS PRESENTS



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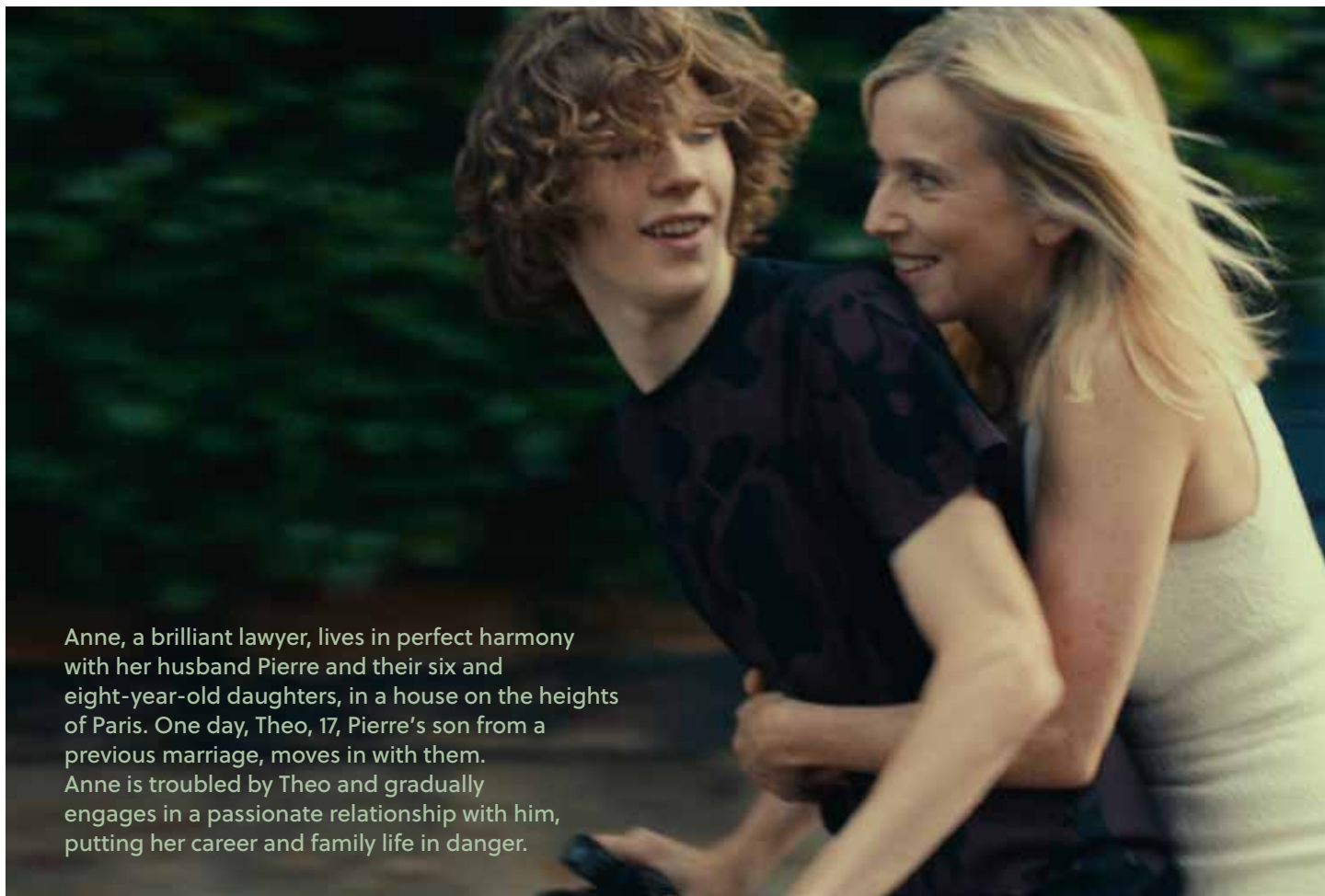
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Anne, a brilliant lawyer, lives in perfect harmony with her husband Pierre and their six and eight-year-old daughters, in a house on the heights of Paris. One day, Theo, 17, Pierre's son from a previous marriage, moves in with them. Anne is troubled by Theo and gradually engages in a passionate relationship with him, putting her career and family life in danger.

Interview with CATHERINE BREILLAT

Last Summer is based on a danish film, queen of hearts. why did you want to remake it?

It was Saïd Ben Saïd's idea. He sent me a note, reminding me that we had met three years earlier at the Belfort festival, and telling me that he had just bought the remake rights to a Danish film and thought I would do better than the original!

I was in pretty rough shape back then. I didn't want to make films anymore. I think I was also silently depressed; after all, physically, I am still in a bad place. Being hemiplegic is not easy.

I watched the film and was astounded by the lie at the heart of it. To tell such a big lie and make people believe you, it has to be true to you somehow! I thought it was a brilliant narrative device, worthy of Shakespeare.

Apart from this device, your film is very different from the original, that was about a middle-class woman who commits adultery in an almost predatory way. In Last Summer, you film the purity of desire and feelings.

On paper, it is indeed the story of a woman having an affair with her much too young stepson, etc. But this is not the story I wanted to tell. I am not fond of realistic cinema, when it boils down to making formulaic, uptight, and moralistic statements. Moralistic art constricts people and makes them ugly.

But Art is moral, because it makes people beautiful; it looks at them in a way that brings them into bloom and transfigures them.

Contrary to popular belief, I am very romantic! I am obsessed with purity, that's why I can't stand the "sultry" label that is often attached to me. Or when they say I make erotic films. I hate eroticism! Eroticism is men gazing at women as consumer goods. You won't find the slightest trace of eroticism in my films. Admittedly, my work involves harshness and sexuality, because I have always questioned my sexual identity. But my films are first and foremost poetic. I am interested in desire, love, the love drive, guilt... in short, everything that eludes us, that has to do with the unsaid, and what I call our "common place."

At the beginning of the story, Anne has nothing in common with Théo, we can tell he is not completely out of childhood yet, for instance when he plays with his little sisters...

Théo is ill at ease in the adult world, and at first, he finds Anne just as horrible as the other adults. And then there is this pivotal scene, when she returns him his keyring. We don't really picture him as a potential lover at this time. He still has chubby cheeks, he isn't really handsome, and he acts like an arrogant teenager. Nevertheless, she reaches out to him, he

wasn't expecting it, and this is when the film actually starts: he looks up at her, he sees her differently, as if for the first time, and he too takes on another dimension. The nature and temporality of their faces change, just like when Eli Wallach arrives in Elia Kazan's *Baby Doll*.

Suddenly, being together sublimates them. The film believes in the transformative power of desire and love over beings.

Yes, and I have always believed in it. Even in my first films, even in *Dirty Like an Angel* and *36 fillette*, in which men are horrible chauvinists. There is a redemption that comes through love and the act of falling in love. I believe in love, in transformation, and in love transfiguration. And I've had my fair share of those with this film. From the moment Anne and Théo embrace their desire, his very presence makes her look younger, it gives her light and grace. She relives the adolescence she was deprived of, because it is hinted at that this period of her life was ruined for her. And this light between them makes the audience understand that they have fallen in love.

We totally forget their age gap...

When we filmed the tattoo scene, when Anne starts reviving her youth, I said to Léa: "You don't think it through, you're fifteen. It's like *Pauline at the Beach*. You're not an adult anymore, you're Pauline. Your words are only meant to express pure joy, the intoxication of talking for the sake of talking, it's all fun and freedom..." And this is the hardest thing to play for an actress: the sparkling eyes, the smile, imagining you're fifteen again!

At some point, their relationship becomes so obvious that it's not a very young man being with a mature woman anymore. They're just human beings, and it's much more interesting that way! Each time I would bring Samuel's face closer to Léa's skin, he would eroticize her, make her younger and more beautiful.

How did you manage that?

That's the miracle of casting. Léa and Samuel trusted me completely. Samuel maybe even more, because he was innocent, in the sense that he had never acted before. One morning he took his high school final exam, and in the afternoon, he had his first love scene! They never recoiled from the camera, and the camera was absolutely in love with them. The beauty of their relationship stems from that defencelessness and incredible purity.

We worked in total abandon and symbiosis. I was them, they were me, they were mine. I always say that actors are my modeling clay

Anne and Théo are often filmed very closely, as if in a bubble from which their social environment has been expelled.

Yes, because when two persons can't take their eyes of each other, and hang on their partner's every word, it's like they're alone in the world. Should there be a deafening racket, they wouldn't even hear it. I had shown Samuel *Ivan the Terrible*, with all the sidelong glances. In *Last Summer*, I almost made Samuel squint, because he looks at Léa out of the corner of his eye all the time.

I came to realise that I am a director of emotions. And I do capture emotions in these bare faces, sidelong

glances, and shiny eyes... I am both a voyeur and a seer. I like to contemplate the human soul in its slightest shudders, I find its ambiguity absolutely beautiful.

You had never filmed so many tears before...

When we shot the scene on the grass, Léa almost lost it because I asked her for a single tear, neither more nor less. And it had to run down one cheek precisely, and not the other, otherwise it would have ruined the frame! But she ended up doing exactly what I'd asked, which is deeply touching. We can feel that Anne is withdrawn, she can't burst into tears. Her eyes just get misty, and then she sheds a single tear... When Théo asks her about her "first time," he thinks it's just a trivial question. Especially today, since social norms are more permissive than they used to be. And suddenly, he realizes that this woman he thought he knew, and who is older than him, is beside herself because of this question. He suddenly feels an outpouring of tenderness for her, as if he were twenty years older than her, and he was the one who had to comfort and protect her. This is the moment we realise that he loves her.

When Théo asks Anne all these questions, I wasn't sure having them flat on their stomachs on the grass was the best option. I hesitated a lot, I thought maybe a fifty-year-old woman would look ridiculous lying like that next to a very young man. But I really wanted to see their shoulders graze, to have that innocent, youthful moment, with these two people abandoning themselves to the summer.

The scene in the car, when they come back from their fun time near the water, is a moment of pure joy...

It is my nod to the 1960's, with the convertible car! This scene epitomises Anne's newfound adolescence, but she doesn't even realise it. And when they come home with the children in their arms, they have become the couple.

Two temporalities coexist in the film: the family or social time, which is a bit naturalist, and the out-of-time moments when Anne and Théo are together.

I like naturalist cinema, but I think it needs to be shaken up by expressionism, because "good acting" cannot really convey the kind of tension I am looking for. My films are about emotions, not daily life. It also stems from the film I saw when I was twelve, which was a revelation and the reason I became a director: Bergman's *Sawdust and Tinsel*, an impression later confirmed by *Persona*.

Also, I always think about Hitchcock, with these enigmatic women, and painters of course. I position actors in the frame like painters do in paintings. Painters make endless studies to place a head, an arm, or a sidelong glance, with absolutely artificial yet natural precision. We must fight naturalism to let emotions enter the frame.

For *Romance*, I thought about Georges de La Tour's transparency. For *Bluebeard*, it was Cranach... And for *Last Summer*, it was Caravaggio. He helped me a great deal, especially for the love scene...

Why Caravaggio?

Caravaggio caused an upheaval in the world of art when he painted *Mary Magdalen in Ecstasy*. He dared adding sensuality and flesh to divine ecstasy... Sex is a power issue, which religions fight against because it competes with religion. Too often, we want to reduce the flesh to dirty pleasures, sometimes a little charming, but always trivial. As for me, I want to film this divine ecstasy, when we reach the transparent body.

Each love scene is directed much differently...

Each love scene tells something different. They are not only saying: they're making love. In the first love scene between Théo and Anne, for instance, there is no counter-shot of Anne, because Théo is wrapped-up in his own pleasure.

During the shooting, I would sleep on set, in the bed shown in the film. At night, I would get up and think about the next sequences! So my directing was probably more precise and sophisticated than usual. Especially for the second love scene, in which I didn't want counter-shots either, because for me a love scene must be clear, flowing, and gracious until the end.

In this second love scene, not only do you stay on her, but it is also one of those moments when you stray the most from naturalism.

In this scene, I didn't know how to film Léa. This is when *Mary Magdalen in Ecstasy* was so helpful. I looked at the painting again and I saw that Mary Magdalen – whose nostrils and aquiline nose look very much like Léa's – placed her head a very special way, and I asked Léa to draw her inspiration from it:

"It's ecstatic love, you stretch and arch your neck, and you rest on the top of your head." For that scene to be beautiful, there could be nothing crude about it, and movements needed to be choreographed. Love looks nothing like porn. It is the transparent body, the carnal fusion, the evanescence, the ecstasy, the "no body."

The scene ends on her, in very pale tones, so that we don't know if it's death or eternity when the shot starts lasting unusually long.

Yes indeed, because I wanted to reach rapture, to be enthralled. This is when I remembered that *Mary Magdalen in Ecstasy* was once thought to be *Mary Magdalen on her Tomb*. So I pointed my finger at Léa and shouted: "Die, Léa, die right now! Stop breathing!" She stopped breathing. And I told Samuel: "Leave, stay away from the frame!" And there she was, completely alone.

I had never seen a kiss filmed that way before, in such an extreme close-up. This kiss is so sexual it ends up becoming abstract...

Again, I came up with this idea at night, on set. I wasn't happy with what we had planned, and I got up several times to see where I could put the camera. That's when I imagined this radical close-up, with Léa and Samuel slowly turning towards each other, as if attracted, magnetised by each other. I wanted their mouths to meet in a real kiss, deep, wet, entwined, when mouths are drawn together. Not your typical movie kiss!

You take the issue of abuse out of the equation, without denying that it exists, especially through Anne's work as a lawyer...

The character was already a lawyer in the Danish film, but I chose to give it another dimension, especially by opening the film with the young girl who has been raped, who is played by an extraordinary actress...

The camera lingers on her, and on her intense, slightly stubborn, at once cheeky and shy look, which reminds us of other young heroines in your filmography...

I had put an ad on the internet, and when she answered, I was immediately drawn to that girl with hair all over her face and opaque eyes, like Marie Trintignant's. And when we shot the scene and her chin started quivering, it was an amazing thing to see.

In the love scene with her husband, unlike when she's with Théo, Anne talks all the time...

This conjugal love is genuine love, yet it is also a routine in a way. In this scene, Anne also tilts her head back, but a lot less. For this I was inspired by the painting of a naked woman hanging above their bed!

The husband is also a beautiful character.

Yes, and I think that Olivier Rabourdin is very sexy! As for Léa and Clotilde, Saïd is the one who thought about Olivier – he definitely has a flair for casting! As soon as I met Olivier, I was hooked. I think he looks like an American actor, with his all-vertical wrinkles – not horrible horizontal lines that mess up your face,

but lines like scars. Also, he has that heavy, beautiful look, this massive, almost bulky body, this stature... I was sure he would look good without a shirt on. I wanted Anne's husband to be really handsome. And really gentle and humane.

We often see the two little girls as well.

I didn't want them to be just a pretext, I wanted them to be full of grace. One is totally feminine and charming, while the other is more restrained. I wanted the audience to fall in love with this family, and these girls... I like to film children, because they do things out of love, you should never be bossy with them.

Why did you choose Léa Drucker?

As I said, at first it was Saïd's idea. I wouldn't have thought about Léa if it were not for him. On the face of it, she's not my type of actress... Yet, when I met her, I thought she was terrific. And above all, I saw her as the actress I would film, not as she had already been filmed. Suddenly, she became my actress, right there in my home, as I was looking at her in the eye while she was talking to me about the script, how she wanted to make the film, how she trusted me – even though I have an outrageous reputation, which isn't me, but I have it.

Léa has both a Bergmanian and a Hitchcockian look. She can seem impassive and yet have those surreal movements, which makes her even more troubling. For instance, when she climbs the stairs while screaming at her husband, I asked her to do it backwards wearing stilettos!

Actually, her body had never been so present in a film.

Yes, right from the first shot or almost, when we see her wearing a bra designed by Dita Von Teese, who is second to none when it comes to underwear, like 1960s-looking push-up bras. Straightaway, Anne is a body.

Léa wears the same dresses as Isabelle Renaud in *Perfect Love*, or Arsinée Khanjian in *Fat Girl*. They are 1950s sheath dresses in different colours, including white. And she wears high heels. Not the straight kind they make now, but those from the 1960s, with the soft curve. 1960s heels are the most beautiful in the world...

I wanted Léa to look like Ava Gardner or Rita Hayworth, these eternal stars whose elegance make films seem untouched by time. I have always chosen costumes and hairstyles carefully in my films, because they can make a film look old. And I want to make timeless films!

And how did you find Samuel Kircher?

I met Samuel thanks to his brother, Paul, and I just fell for him. He's got absolute charm, absolute grace. Samuel is totally graceful, radiant, but at the same time mysterious and opaque. He gives his all to the camera, he doesn't fear it, he lets himself be devoured by it without a single muscle twitching. And Samuel has this amazing smile. There are not many men who smile on screen.

And what about Clotilde Courau? In Nina's flashy beauty salon, the tone is clearly more brash.

I wanted a set in the style of Almodóvar, in orange and purple tones. Clotilde is quite eccentric herself,

the set inspired her to play the role a bit like Arletty. Dressed in a flashy pink, half-transparent nylon blouse, Nina is not a jealous sister, or some vague family member. She has her own temperament. .

At some point, it feels like the film could become a kind of bourgeois drama in the style of Claude Chabrol, but its expressionism can never be repressed...

When Anne argues with her husband, the register does become more naturalist, but I didn't want to dwell on that turmoil, I wanted Léa to become Hitchcockian, like Tippi Hedren in *Marnie*!

When Anne is about to lie to her husband, I asked Léa to stop moving, to look at Olivier out of the corner of her eye, then to turn her head very slowly. Cinema, at least mine, is about slowness, not speed. And in this scene, it is Léa's eye that makes her stand up slowly, as if she were gliding through space. Directing means inventing the right movements for the film, even if it is not true to life.

The film cannot squelch its sentimental side either...

When Théo knocks at Anne and her father's door at the end, he is completely driven by his feelings. I didn't shy away from filming tears, mucus and saliva mixing when Théo kisses Anne. Théo looks like a lost child, miserable and madly in love, inconsolable, tormented by the kind of heartache that can be deadly.

In the script and in the first version we shot, the scene was less sentimental. But when I shot the last love scene, I managed to capture my absolute dream: this surreal purity, when she climaxes with her fists

clenched, it has nothing to do with trivial pleasure. When I thought about how I had filmed the previous scene on the front steps, with him as a teenager who just wants her to confess that she did love him, so that he can go back to his life and start shaping his adult self, I realised that something was missing between this scene and the ecstatic love scene I had just shot, which I loved so much.

So I asked that we shot the scene again, this time with emotions reaching their height. I thought: it needs to be passionate love, let's be bold and make *Gone With the Wind* again, let's dare indulging in absolute romanticism!

Why is Anne gripping a key in her hand in the final love scene?

I wanted the audience to keep guessing! Anne comes with her fists clenched, and when Théo says: "Say that you're not in love with me!", she opens her hand slowly, and there is this key. It is the key to her heart, the key of origins... It's completely symbolic, like in a painting.

Why did you completely renew your film crew?

Saïd didn't want me to work with the people I usually collaborate with. So I ended up making a new film, nine years after my previous one, without any point of reference! I directed the film step by step, like when I made *A Real Young Girl*, as if I were discovering cinema. There was a general sense of endless concentration and humility on set.

How was your collaboration with director of photography Jeanne Lapoirie?

With Jeanne, it was extraordinary, there were no power games, it was just work. I had brought my usual bed to rest between the shots, but there was no time for resting, because she prepared the lightning incredibly fast, without saying a word.

I didn't want a naturalist kind of lightning either. I wanted to see Léa's steel blue eyes even when she had her back to the light. I didn't want contrasts either, only radiant faces. I am obsessed with brightness. My words are quite violent, there's no need to emphasise this harshness on screen. On the contrary, it needs to be bright, like in a Hitchcock film. Jeanne was sometimes baffled by my requests, but she always managed to meet them!

How did the editing process go?

I worked with François Quiqueré, a wonderful editor. The film was like a rough diamond that needed to be chiselled and polished to make it shine and achieve absolute purity... Saïd was extremely demanding at this stage. When we showed him a version of the film I was more than satisfied with, he said: "Yes, there is enough material to make a great film. You need to figure out a way to make it great, you must cut half an hour." He also made impressively precise suggestions as to which scenes needed to be permuted or cut. In the end, I accelerated the succession of scenes to give the film a gripping thriller feel, while keeping the slow pace of some scenes.

And what about the music

There are no scores in my films, only songs. I was told that when she was asked "What would you take on a desert island?", Kim Gordon answered: Douglas Keeseey's book on Catherine Breillat. I had no money, but I love rock, so I decided to contact her. She answered right away and graciously composed with her band a telluric rock song for the accident scene and the end credits.

And why did you choose Léo Ferré's song *20 ans*?

In my opinion, the crazy love aspect makes Anne completely sympathetic. Nevertheless, one may still find this woman cold and mean, and think that she destroys this boy... Léo Ferré's song puts this judgement into perspective: "Love is like cigarettes, you take one then you throw it away, you often die and then..." Of course, feelings are intense, they are extremely painful, but thank God, even after the worst heartache, we all get back on our feet eventually.

It seems to me that, as a director, you keep ploughing your own furrow, but you are now doing it in a simpler, brighter way...

The film is called *Last Summer* for a reason! I wanted a clear title, and I wanted to make a film full of light, to smash the distorted image people have of me and my work.

And it was also my comeback as a director, at the age of seventy-five. It was a huge challenge... A shooting means youth, but youth at heart, and through faith in cinema. And I don't need to be young because my actors are young. I may be old, but my cinema is young. I am disabled, but my films aren't!

Interview by Claire Vassé



Interview with LÉA DRUCKER

How did you enter the universe of director Catherine Breillat?

Our producer, Saïd Ben Saïd, came up with the idea. I think Catherine was not familiar with my work. At first, I wasn't sure I would fit in, I thought it would depend on our meeting, which first happened on the phone.

Then we met in person. I could feel her watching me while I was telling her how much I loved the script. I didn't talk much, I mostly listened as she explained how she wanted to shoot some scenes, and talked about her views on cinema and her love for Caravaggio and 17th century paintings. She really shared her whole vision of cinema with me, and her vision for the film. And then it all fell into place rather simply.

Were you familiar with her work?

I remember watching *36 Fillette* when it came out. I also watched *Perfect Love*, *Fat Girl*, *Abuse of Weakness*... I loved those films, because they

challenged me. So I was excited about making this one and entering Catherine's world. Of course, I was also quite nervous, but this is why I do this job, you can't control everything, quite the opposite, you need to walk into the unknown.

Catherine has clear opinions and a unique vision – I wouldn't call it radical, but it is really coherent and precise. It is wonderful to work with directors who are ambitious and brilliant, and who have such a strong aesthetic universe.

When you read the script, what did you make of Théo and Anna's connection?

They bond over the fact that they both feel trapped. He thinks he needs to let loose and enjoy his youth. She gets bored within her bourgeois bounds, and suddenly she wants to smash them all to pieces.

But just like in real life, what stood out the most in the scenario was the complexity and mystery of chaotic relationships that could go terribly wrong. There is something tragic, dangerous, and dizzying

about that story. I couldn't find all the answers, and that uncertainty intrigued me. I agree with the idea that we cannot always define love, and the element of destruction it might hold. I felt a calling when I read the script. Sometimes it seems to stray from realism. One could indeed say that the story is only happening inside this woman's mind. Catherine reinforced that impression through her directing, editing, and mixing.

The intimacy between Anne and Théo is based on a form of lie: they hide Théo's theft from his father.

It marks the beginning of a pact, even though Anne isn't really aware of it. Through this pact, she is saying: "Now you're going to stop wallowing in that teenage, tormented and rebellious world of yours that we all find so annoying. I offer you another role."

She spends all day at work with young girls who are victims of sexual assaults. A part of her can easily connect with teenagers. It is this very part that encourages her to sign that pact; yet, unbeknownst to her, it will get them involved in a perilous love story.

Despite their age gap, Anne does not treat Théo as a child and Théo is not searching for a mother figure, it is an equal relationship...

Sometimes Théo is even more adult than she is! Anne's traumatic experience when she was young is not thoroughly explored in the film, but it probably informs their affair and her fling with that young man. It is a new beginning for her, and maybe a part of her wants to reenact what went wrong when she was just a girl. In any case, the shooting rekindled reactions and attitudes from my own teenage years. It felt like I was fifteen again when I was riding a scooter with

Samuel! I let myself get carried away by the situation, by this youthful energy..

We never get the feeling that Anne is sexually assaulting Théo...

One might think that she is a predator on paper, but in my opinion, the film is not about a case of abuse at all. If Anne were a predator, it would be obvious, we could check all the boxes, only it is a lot more complex than that: there are feelings involved on both sides... So, what do we do when this happens? Morality does not really apply to these kinds of "love stories." I use inverted commas, because it is hard to really define their story. Some might say this is not love, that it is incest, because it happens within the family unit. This story could very well shatter Anne's professional life, devastate her family life, and destroy the relationship between the father and his son. But then again, once we've said that, what do we make of that story?

I also wanted to make that film to challenge received wisdom, as intelligently, or at least as sensitively as possible. Ideology cannot have an answer for everything, we are human beings first and foremost, with twisted souls – not "twisted" as "messed up," but rather as "nonlinear." And I think that the film does a great job at exposing these opaque human souls, without giving us answers or imposing some truths on us.

I also like that Catherine ends the film with Léo Ferré's song 20 ans. It is even more intriguing as we do not forget the complexity of the situation. Catherine has a sharp vision of things, she is a free thinker, in the sense that she doesn't yield to the latest ideology in trend, she has her own, unapologetic way of thinking...

Anne and Théo are mostly filmed as if they were in a bubble, oblivious of the outside world.

I could tell that the camera was always on us, and really close to what was happening within our characters. It required constant focus and real intimacy on our part. Even in apparently mundane scenes, nothing was insignificant. Anne and Théo are always connected, within each other's eyes. It is a dizzying thing to play.

Catherine Breillat often focuses on one character, instead of going from one to the other.

I was surprised when I read the script, surprised during the shooting, and even more surprised when I watched the film, which has taken another dimension through editing. We can feel the gaze of the character who is off-screen. I think it's amazing, because it really says a lot about what is going on between Anne and Théo, what happens when they are in each other's presence, how the way they look at each other influences who they are.

More broadly speaking, it falls in line with my work as an actress, which isn't only about preparing and building a character. Acting also means embracing whatever influence another actor might have on you, and the influence you might have on them, not rationally or intellectually, but irrationally. Catherine really highlights this irrational element in her film.

During the second love scene between Anne and Théo, time stands still in a dreamlike way. We switch to a form or death, or is it eternity?

For the scene, Catherine came to set with Caravaggio's painting *Mary Magdalen in Ecstasy*, and she told me: "You see, this is what I want." So, I looked at the

painting and I tried to respond to it emotionally, and to meet Catherine's high expectations. And when she kept the shot going, I didn't wonder about the result, I just let myself get carried away by the image. It is so great to be directed with a painting by Caravaggio!

And generally speaking, how would you describe Catherine Breillat's direction?

I didn't always understand where she was taking me, but I tried to just go with the flow. Catherine uses her voice a lot to direct, she talks all the time, drawing on some fascinating vocabulary – even in everyday life, she has a unique way of speaking.

Sometimes, Catherine says brutal or radical things, she seems possessed when she films, but it is only to push you in an almost mystical and surreal direction, to take you out of your own self.

How did your meeting with Samuel Kircher go?

We didn't meet before the shooting; Catherine didn't want us to!

Samuel is amazing. He is a delicate, sensitive, generous, and honest young man. He really threw himself into it.

Since I was much older than him, I was careful not to overwhelm him with explanations and advice. If he wanted to talk to me, to ask me questions, my door was always open, but I realized straight away that he had a tremendous instinct, and that he understood perfectly well what we were aiming at. And the commitment the film required.

Samuel was also in a joyful disposition. He loved Catherine. Our scenes together weren't easy, but we both trusted her completely. Even more so as there were no blurred lines. Catherine was very methodical,

she tackled those scenes as if they were stunts, with a technical and precise approach regarding frames and camera moves.

It reassured me to know in advance how she planned to shoot those scenes, what she wanted to see or not. She was very clear right from the start: "I am not interested in flesh. I am interested in faces." At first, I thought it would be easier that way, but actually, it is a hundred times harder than being filmed from a distance! The face is such an intimate thing.

Regardless of that focus on your face, it seems like you have never been so physically involved in a role...

Yes, and it is new to me. It started right from the costume fittings. Catherine is incredibly specific about fabrics, the slightest seam, shoes... When I saw the tight dress and the high heels, I wondered if I would be able to move about properly! But in the end, it helped me get into character. Having my hair always perfectly styled, being that desired and desiring woman prevented me from hiding myself, it made me move a certain way in intimate scenes, and it helped me to accept to be a sexual character, a woman who is comfortable with her own body.

Catherine brought me to a particular state and guided me towards something I had never done before, unless maybe on the stage. With Catherine, you can tell you are being looked at in a different way. And she does so with all the actors. She made us look wonderful. I remember she wanted Olivier Rabourdin to look like an American actor.

The shot showing Anne's face when she decides to lie to her husband is so eerie it looks like a scene from a horror film...

Anne suddenly becomes a character out of a film noir from the 1950s. Before the shooting, I contemplated that scene with my usual acting tools, mostly psychological stuff. As an actress I move a lot, I am quite expressive, I always think that I need to go all out, to expose my guts, but Catherine told me: "No, no, nothing, zero." Once again, she was very precise, and she wanted to keep it all within. It almost looked like Noh theatre, or at least how I picture it. I had rarely explored that form of stillness; it brings about a kind of monstrous shift in the character, not unlike possession. Annes almost ends up believing in her own lie, she is in fierce denial, on the verge of madness.

Denial?

Anne feels that she risks being punished socially, that her life might get ruined, especially her family life, which she wants to preserve at all costs. Therein lies her inner revolution, the driving force of her madness that pushes her further into denial as a woman. Yet, as a criminal lawyer, she is perfectly aware of what she is doing, she sees that kind of stories every day.

Catherine Breillat does not usually show her characters crying...

Yes, this time she does so, albeit tactfully. I love how she orchestrated emotion, and how she edited the film. Each character has his or her own emotional

journey. The film is neither cynical nor mean, it is just hopelessly human, with all the complexity it entails.

The last love scene is part of the storyline, yet one could also say that Anne dreams it. Especially with the mysterious key she is holding...

Catherine would never explain to me what it meant! So I imagined many possibilities: is it a key from a fairy-tale, the key to dreams, the key to open a prison door? Anne is happy with her husband, she has chosen her life with him, but with Théo, she also chooses to escape this cage and to follow her desires.

There is noticeable mimicry between you and Catherine Breillat, especially in your intense gaze.

I must have borrowed things from her without necessarily realizing it. Only when I watched the film again recently did I notice that I had absorbed a little bit of her stubbornness, her intensity, and the way her inner child suddenly pops up from time to time. It is astonishing. Catherine is funny. She told me: "You are like me, you are crazy about films, and that's why you could stand me!"

Interview by Claire Vassé



CATHERINE BREILLAT's filmography

AS SCRIPTWRITER

- 2000** *TO MATTHEW* by Xavier Beauvois
Venice Film Festival 2000 - Official Competition
- 1993** *COUPLES AND LOVERS* by John Lvoff
- 1992** *THE NIGHT OF THE OCEAN* by Antoine Perset
- 1991** *MONEY* by Philippe Galland
- 1990** *CATHERINE C.* by Pierre Beuchot
- 1989** *ZANZIBAR* by Christine Pascal
- 1988** *MILAN NOIR* by Ronald Chamamah
- 1985** *POLICE* by Maurice Pialat
- 1981** *THE SKIN* by Liliana Cavani
Cannes Film Festival 1981 - Official Selection - Competition
- 1977** *BILITIS* by David Hamilton
- 1975** *CATHERINE & CO* by Michel Boisrond

AS DIRECTOR

- 2013** *ABUSE OF WEAKNESS*
- 2010** *THE SLEEPING BEAUTY*
Venice Film Festival 2010 - Orizzonti
- 2007** *AN OLD MISTRESS*
Cannes Film Festival 2007 - Official Selection - Competition
- 2002** *ANATOMY OF HELL*
Berlinale 2004 - Forum
- 2001** *BRIEF CROSSING*
Venice Film Festival 2001 - Nuovi Territori
- 2001** *SEX IS COMEDY*
Directors' Fortnight 2002
- 2000** *FAT GIRL*
Berlinale 2001 - Official Selection - Competition
- 1999** *ROMANCE*
- 1996** *PERFECT LOVE*
Directors' Fortnight 1996
- 1995** *AUX NIÇOIS QUI MAL Y PENSENT*
- 1991** *DIRTY LIKE AN ANGEL*
- 1987** *36 FILLETTE*
- 1979** *TAPAGE NOCTURNE*
- 1976** *A REAL YOUNG GIRL*

Anne	LÉA DRUCKER
Théo	SAMUEL KIRCHER
Pierre	OLIVIER RABOURDIN
Mina	CLOTILDE COURAU
Serena	SERENA HU
Angela	ANGELA CHEN

Direction	CATHERINE BREILLAT
Produced by	SAÏD BEN SAÏD
Associate producer	KEVIN CHNEIWEISS
Executive producers	RENÉ EZRA, CAROLINE BLANCO, CLIFFORD WERBER
Script and Dialogues	CATHERINE BREILLAT with the collaboration of PASCAL BONITZER Based on the film <i>QUEEN OF HEARTS</i> written by Maren Louise Kaëhne and May El-Toukhy, directed by May El-Thoukhy
Image	JEANNE LAPOIRIE AFC
Editing	FRANÇOIS QUIQUERÉ LMA
1st AD	GABRIÈLE ROUX
Sound	DAMIEN LUQUET, LOÏC PRIAN, KATIA BOUTIN, CYRIL HOLTZ
Costumes	KHADIJA ZEGGAÏ
Production Design	SÉBASTIEN DANOS
Make-Up	DELPHINE JAFFART
Hair	ANTONIA SILBERTI
Unit Production Manager	LAZIZ BELKAÏ
Postproduction Director	CHRISTINE DUCHIER
Music Collaboration	KIM GORDON
A production by	SBS
With the support of	CANAL +
With the participation of	CINÉ +
With the support of	CNC
In association with	PYRAMIDE, NORDISK FILM PRODUCTION, GLOBALGATE ENTERTAINMENT, CINECAP 6
French Distribution	PYRAMIDE DISTRIBUTION
International Sales	PYRAMIDE INTERNATIONAL

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INTERNATIONAL