



Festival del film Locarno
Official selection

THELMA FILMS
PRESENTS

CLOTILDE HESME JENNA THIAM TCHÉKY KARYO

DAYDREAMS

L'INDOMPTÉE

a film by
CAROLINE DERUAS

CAROLINE DERUAS

Caroline Deruas learned filmmaking on the field. Director's assistant, continuity girl, then screenplay writer, she worked with many directors such as Yann Gonzalez, Romain Goupil, Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi and Philippe Garrel with whom she co-wrote *A Burning Hot Summer*, *Jealousy*, and *In the Shadow of Women*. She directed three short films including: *L'Etoile de Mer* selected at The Director's Fortnight and *Les Enfants de la Nuit* which won the Silver Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival. Caroline Deruas was also a pensioner at the Villa Medici, set for her first feature film *Daydreams*.

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FRANCE. 2016. 1H38. DCP. 1.85. 5.1. COLOR

SYNOPSIS

Axèle is a photographer, Camille is a writer. They meet when they are both awarded a year's residency at the Villa Medici in Rome. Camille is accompanied by her husband Marc Landré, an acclaimed author. When their marriage becomes curiously competitive, Camille becomes close to Axèle. But who is Axèle really? A committed, uncompromising artist who identifies with her work? Or the ghost of the Villa? From their year at the Villa Medici, where bodies and minds are liberated, no one will emerge intact.

DAYDREAMS A FILM BY CAROLINE DERUAS
STARRING: CLOTILDE HESME JENNA THIAM TCHÉKY KARYO BERNARD VERLEY PASCAL RÉNÉRIC MARILYNE CANTO TANYA LOPERT
LOLITA CHAMMAH VIRGIL VERNIER CANDELA COTTIS CATHERINE LIBERT FAUSTO PARAVIDINO MARINA ROCCO FILIPPO TIMI
SCREENPLAY, ADAPTATION AND DIALOGUES: CAROLINE DERUAS AND MAUD AMÉLINE — MUSIC BY NICOLA PIOVANI — DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: PASCALE MARIN — EDITED BY FLORIANE ALLIER — ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: PAOLO TROTTA
SOUND: FRANK ROUSSELLE LUCA GIZZI MATTHIEU DENIAU PHILIPPE GRIVEL — PRODUCTION DESIGNERS: GIADA CALABRIA — COSTUME DESIGNER: BRIGITTE BOURNEUF — LINE PRODUCERS: ISABELLE DAGNAC
CLAUDIO VECCHIO — POST-PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR: CHRISTELLE DIDIER — EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: CONCHITA AIROLDI LAURENTINA GUIDOTTI — PRODUCED BY CHRISTINE GOZLAN AND DAVID POIROT
A THELMA FILMS PRODUCTION WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF ARTE FRANCE CINÉMA — CINÉ* IN ASSOCIATION WITH INDEFILMS 4 WITH THE SUPPORT OF LA REGIONE LAZIO AND L'ACADEMIE DE FRANCE A ROME - VILLA MEDICI



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INTERVIEW WITH CAROLINE DERUAS

Daydreams is set exclusively in the Villa Medici, the home of the French Academy in Rome, where you held a residency for a year in 2011. Did the Villa give you the idea for the film?

I have a very strong connection to places. That comes from my childhood and the powerful presence of one house. For me, places are characters. I am very receptive to their stories, their humanity and all they represent. I literally fell in love with Villa Medici the first time I set foot there sixteen years ago. Ten years later, I won a year's residency there at the third attempt. My relationship to the Villa Medici is comparable to a romantic obsession, a conquest. When you begin a residency there you try to appropriate the Villa and possess it more or less differently than everybody else. Appropriation, for me, took the form of this film, and I was lucky to have Eric de Chasse as director. With his benevolence and instinctual intelligence toward artists, he literally «gave me the keys» to the Villa while respecting my need not to divulge the screenplay.

Villa Medici is a unique, rare and precious place, magnificent yet overwhelming, protective yet menacing. It has a maternal aspect. It is a timeless location. You find yourself basking in a floating temporality—a bubble between dream and reality.

The film is broadly based on your own experiences. How do you approach this intimate aspect of the story?

On this film, my approach was to play with fire in a personal sense. Whenever an idea scared me, I thought, «That must mean it's interesting.» Opening up about my personal life fell into that category, but I didn't want to simply document it. That definitely would not have been interesting. I have worked a lot with Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi, who's an expert in the dramatization of her personal life. She takes her life as a starting point, but not only. She exacerbates, brutalizes, sublimates and transcends it until it becomes interesting and dramatic enough for an audience. That was my model, and my co-writer, Maud Ameline,

really helped me find the right distance from the subject. Furthermore, I wanted to tell Camille's story through the filter of her imagination. Calling on imagination and «magic» is a basic survival mechanism for me. And the film emerged in an offbeat, dreamlike way, so I never had the sense of being a prisoner of my reality. I tried to capture feelings rather than events.

Fantasy intervenes in your film in a subtle fashion, like a gradual loss of a frame of reference...

I wanted the film to be like my dreams, which always turn out to be nightmares. As a child, my dreams were full-on fantasy features. My conception of fantasy is rooted in those dreams rather than in cinematic references. Elsa Morante believed that the secret of art might be succeeding in reconstituting a work remembered from a dream state. I wanted audiences to be immersed in a universe that begins in reality and gradually topples into dreams and imagination, to the point



of losing track of which of those three worlds we're in, and enjoying that feeling.

I've never been able to make a clear distinction between reality, dream and imagination. I've always had a complicated relationship with reality. It bores me and I don't feel at home there. In any case, it's inevitable that dream and imagination will leave their mark on reality. They are intrinsic parts of reality.

During the writing process, I realized that we were bringing together several genres. The film was at once very intimate, sometimes dramatic, occasionally fantastical, and also funny, almost outlandish, as well as dreamlike. Blending so many genres was a high-risk gamble. And I wanted to be able to slip between them seamlessly. But you only make one debut feature and I wanted to dare to experiment. This abundance of genres and characters was intoxicating for me. I genuinely conceived of this film as an experiment and, I have to admit, I had a lot of fun.

The score by Nicola Piovani contributes to this mysterious, fantastical atmosphere. How did you work together?

Nicola Piovani is an incredible musician and I've been a fan of his work for over fifteen years. He is a very melodic composer, which is pretty rare nowadays. And there's always a form of gentle melancholy in his music, which I find particularly moving. When I contacted him to work on my film, I never thought he'd agree. He saw a rough cut and sensed how much the film was waiting for his music. I'd left whole swathes in silence, waiting for their voice.

We talked a lot, and he was open enough to genuinely listen. I wanted the music to be almost like the inner voice of the Villa, like a siren's song, bewitching and unnerving. I also wanted his Italian nuances and, through the choice of instruments, a blend of period and genre once more. I played him a recording of Toscanini conducting Debussy's *La Damselle Elue*, and I talked to him about the music of *Suspiria*, or Badalamenti's scores, with regard to specific themes. I found the most important references in his own scores, however. The overture for

Marco Bellochio's *In the Name of the Father* is, to my mind, one of the most beautiful and powerful film overtures.

Camille, your heroine, is a female artist. You have her male partner say that «women don't have the necessity to create.» Do you think women still have to fight this kind of prejudice?

At the time of Lucienne Heuvelmans, the first woman to take up a residency at the Villa Medici in 1911, a woman could not practice her art without the permission of her father or husband. That was a century ago—it's not so far. And that's after centuries and centuries of male domination. We cannot have resolved that whole issue in a single century.

It was important for me that Camille should be a mother. An artist and a mother, not one or the other. And that's precisely why she is fighting. At the Villa Medici, Camille came looking for what Virginia Woolf would call «a room of one's own.» She has allowed herself to be locked into an artistic and personal relationship, in which the man is the creative partner. He is older and was creative long before her. Their stay at Villa Medici only exacerbates that aspect. He is terrified at the idea of losing his hold on her because, for him, it means losing her entirely. Throughout the film, she tries to throw off the chains and Axèle shows her the way. Axèle is as free and unaligned as Camille is hardworking and grounded. Axèle embodies the female and artistic power that Camille is chasing after. She has everything that Camille aspires to—complete artistic freedom, unbridled imagination, steely willpower, a romantic personality and access to a world of unreality. Axèle is Camille's desire to build and break free coming to life. The film is a flowering, a sort of elevation.

How did you bring together the film's female stars?

I've known Clotilde Hesme since *Les Amants réguliers*. There's even a shot in the movie where we gaze at each other. It makes me smile when I think about it. I've always felt that Clotilde understood what made me

tick. And she's a grown woman, just like me and Jenna Thiam, in fact. I must need that to be able to relate (*laughs*). Clotilde was the obvious alter ego. I wrote the part for her.

Axèle is otherworldly, ethereal, elusive, strong and fragile at the same time. Jenna is all that and more—mysterious, fluttering, with that magical red hair. There is something unreal about her.

I noticed her in *Les Revenants* and talked a lot about her with Anne Consigny, who played her mother in that series and who was a kind of fairy godmother between us. We met in a café and Jenna called me up two hours later, still in the café, to say she'd read the script straight through. She immediately made the character her own and that was wonderful for me. I really enjoyed watching Clotilde and Jenna throughout the shoot and editing. I never tired of it.

You film Tchéky Karyo in a complex role, both endearing and unbearable...

Tchéky is a figure from my teenage years. For me, he was the adventurer in *L'Ours*, the French Harrison Ford. I love trying to get through that male shell of being unmovable and impenetrable. Tchéky immediately grasped the complexity of the character, and I think that's what excited him. He also understood how deeply I loved his character and how deeply, beyond his contradictions, I wanted him to be lovable. I wanted him to be understood, or it would all be pointless. Tchéky is an immense actor, a master of nuance and hugely experienced. I was blown away when I realized that every note, every direction I had given him, had made it into his performance. Every little thing. That was extraordinary.

He also possesses supreme finesse. The scene when he breaks down in tears is a gift to me. Seeing a man cry is very rare, very intimate, and I find it very moving. For so long, I thought that men didn't cry.

Interview by Elysabeth François



«Protective cloak of the night, reminiscences and nightmares as one. Rely on dreams to remember.»