

Rectangle Productions presents

Notre dame

A film by Valérie Donzelli



Locarno Film Festival
Piazza Grande



PLAYTIME



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Notre dame

A film by **Valérie Donzelli**

With

Valérie Donzelli
Pierre Deladonchamps
Thomas Scimeca
Bouli Lanners
Virginie Ledoyen

France, Belgium - 1.85 - 89 min

International Sales : PLAYTIME 5 rue Nicolas Flamel, 75004 Paris +33 1 53 10 33 99 www.playtime.group



Synopsis

Maud Crayon, a failing architect and single mom of two, whose weak ex-husband is still in the picture, can only dream of a miracle to shake things up. Now the famous winner of the contest to lead the renovation of the esplanade of Notre-Dame de Paris, Maud welcomes back in her life her charming ex-boyfriend Bacchus, and must reveal her feelings to both her exes if she wants to start living happily ever after.



INTERVIEW WITH VALÉRIE DONZELLI

The origins of the film

After *Marguerite & Julien*, my producers Edouard Weil and Alice Girard advised me to return to a project more closely inspired by my own life, in which I would be the main character. I wrote the first draft of a screenplay – “Wasp Waist” – which followed a female director’s career path. It was, however, too close for comfort as the distance between fiction and autobiography wasn’t right. In the end, I moved away from her being a filmmaker and made her an architect. These two professions share common aspects – seeing a project through to its end within a given budget, running the risk of seeing one’s creative work severely criticized... With this line of work for my leading character, I was allowing myself to speak about an experience that was familiar to me while not entirely my own. I found her name, Maud Crayon, and I was good to go!

In a certain way, it’s as though my character is a more grown-up and mature version of Adèle, from *Queen of Hearts (La Reine des pommes)*: a Parisian, who now has a job and children. Maud is full of energy, she takes care of everything: her children and her ex, Martial, who comes and stays over every time he has a spat with his new girlfriend; she’s constantly running all over the place. She is tireless, never stops for a minute, always keeps herself busy – she’s a woman on the go, although she doesn’t really know what she’s going after. She is utterly unable to pause for a second to take a good hard look at things and make the decisions that would need to be made for her life to be easier. Determined not to give up anything, she can’t actually gain anything. I really wanted to convey this sensation of speed and energy in the film because Maud carries this driving force within, this neurotic drive that prevents her from ever stopping. Maud Crayon is me to a certain extent, but also all women in urban settings, who work and shoulder everything.



INTERVIEW WITH VALÉRIE DONZELLI

Paris & Notre-Dame

Isn't Notre dame above all a fantastic declaration of love to Paris? You film it beautifully.

Paris is my city by adoption and I wanted to rekindle my love for it, nurture it. It's been going through such a rough time since the 2015 attacks, and it now is as though we were in a permanent state of chaos. It even sounds different. Every five minutes, we can hear the grating sound of police sirens going off. So yes, I wanted to bring its beauty back to the forefront, yet without downplaying its violence and poverty, including all the people who have to live and sleep out on the streets...

Why did you choose the square in front of Notre-Dame as the historical monument that required revamping?

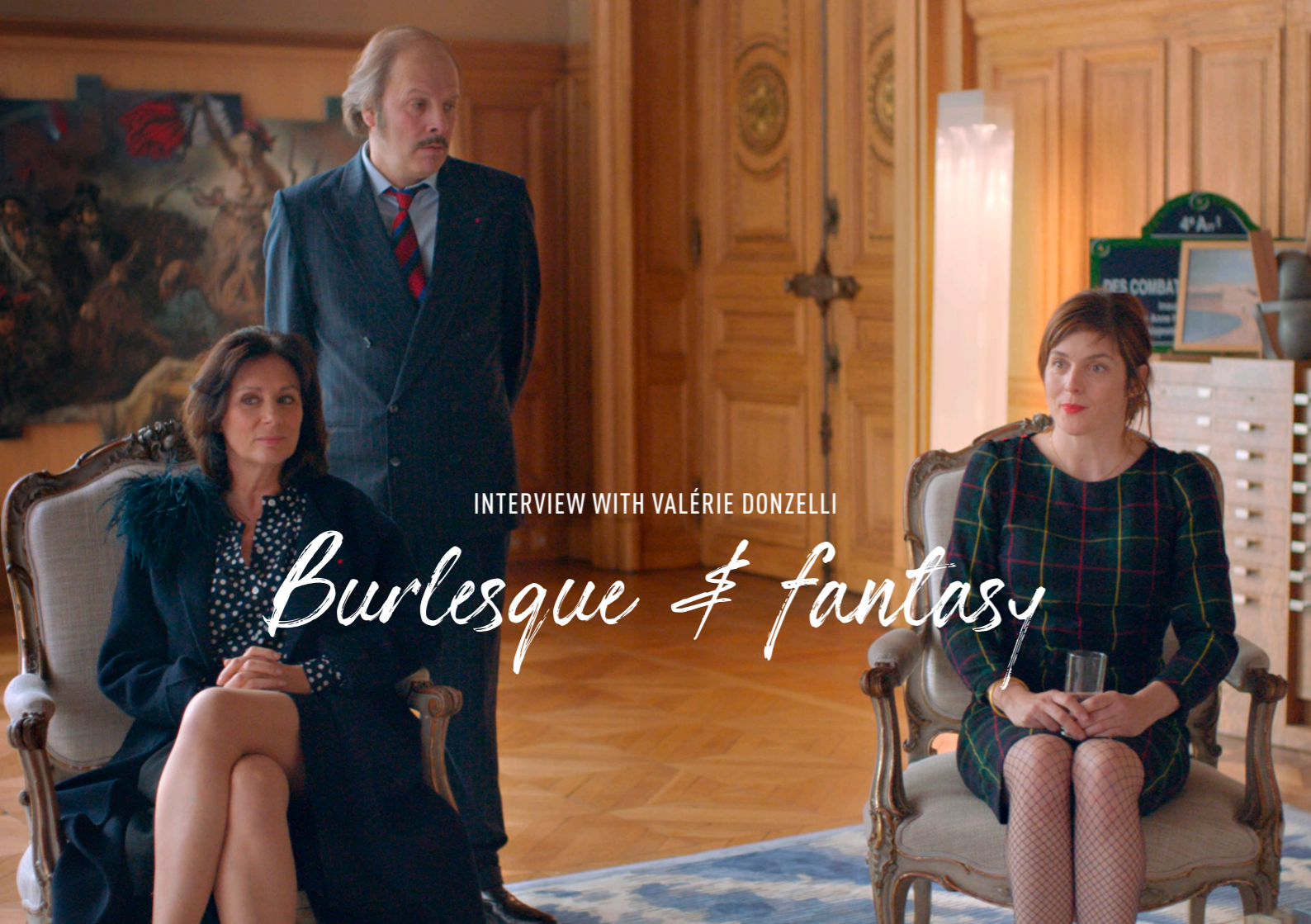
I wanted to tackle the story of a failure related to architecture. What could possibly cause a scandal in this area today? Realistically, this scenario could only concern a really old monument to which one would suggest bringing an element of modernity. The only place that seemed probable, while also epitomizing Paris and allowing for an architectural project of this kind was the square in front of Notre-Dame. I did extensive research on the countless fierce debates surrounding urban installations in Paris: the Paul McCarthy anal plug-like tree at Place Vendôme in 2014, Beaubourg, The Louvre Pyramid, the Bastille Opera House, and Buren's Columns in the Palais Royal's main courtyard in 1986. In the end, I was most inspired by the Bastille Opera House competition and the scandal about Daniel Buren's work.

What was your reaction when you saw Notre-Dame in flames this year on April 15th ?

I was devastated. I filmed a monument that I love. I lived with Notre-Dame while writing the film – a long process. I regularly went to visit “Our Lady,” I became attached to her; I could feel the wound that the fire was causing. I had known that shooting there wasn’t going to be easy and that it would take a long time to obtain the authorizations: in short, Notre-Dame was kind of the star of my film. Shooting inside the cathedral and on its front square was a true challenge. Today, I wouldn’t be able to film there.

It’s funny but I directed a documentary short for Arte called *Le cinéma de maman (Mama’s Cinema)* in 2017, which talks about filming as a deliberate act, to leave a trace behind, a memento, and be eternal. I never thought I’d find myself illustrating this very point to such an extent with one of my own films. Today, it’s true that my film embodies a singular echo of Notre-Dame. I think I was the last person to film the cathedral as it was, both from inside and outside, yet I didn’t film it thinking that such a disaster could happen, and it isn’t a movie about Notre-Dame. All this is pure chance and now there’s this great debate opposing modernist and conservative approaches, which places the film at the heart of the matter. It’s somewhat overwhelming...





INTERVIEW WITH VALÉRIE DONZELLI

Burlesque & fantasy

From the very onset, we're thrown into absolute burlesque and chaos: people slap one another for the slightest reason, apocalyptic news is broadcast on TV by interchangeable journalists, and we hear that some monks have become diabetic from eating the sweet offerings lavished on them by believers... An anxiety-inducing and irresistibly funny atmosphere...

I wanted to show the world as we experience it today, a world that isn't doing well with ecological disasters, the press and media that have become impersonal, people that either turn increasingly to individualistic or segregated lifestyles. And I wanted to laugh about it, because it's really rather tragic. Benjamin Charbit, with whom I co-wrote the screenplay, and I had a great deal of fun writing these false news segments. However, some of them, like the bit about the diabetic monks, are true.

Even more so than in your previous films, fantasy reigns.

It's something I'm fond of and it's always present in my films, including Declaration of War (La guerre est déclarée). I love comedy and I love burlesque cinema, I love when things are off-beat because it's a way of looking at the world that touches me, that brings a touch of modesty and poetry.

It's a film that belongs to the pervading zeitgeist. Not only does the world not stop turning for the heroine, but we can well see her empathy towards other women, homeless women, forced to camp out in front of the building where she lives...

We're much too accustomed to seeing that. We live in a city where on certain days there are people who die on the street. I, myself, saw the death of a vagrant in my neighborhood. It's appalling, it's unbearable, but what can Maud do, what can we do, despite all the empathy that she feels, that we feel for them? Nothing. There's no solution. That is the reason why I was keen on having the scenes where we see the women make their nest for the night, where we see their vulnerability which is only greater when a storm strikes. This is also why I have a radio host say that with the migrant crisis becoming unbearable, the mayor of Paris has decided to open the doors of the town hall for them. Migrants and poverty are another realistic element defining Paris as it is today.

Pushing things further, we can say that her design escapes her and that her project, modified by men, then becomes "phallic"?

As she didn't participate in the competitive bid, she finds herself de facto in the situation of an imposter. As a result, she doesn't dare say anything and she lets people walk all over her. And it is because she doesn't impose her views among such people that she'll have to make it through the scandal and learn how to become assertive at last. She'll free herself from her professional and sentimental shackles. *Notre dame* is first and foremost a comedy about reconstruction. Maud will lose much with the contest, but she'll win something far more precious in the end: her freedom.





Valérie Donzelli // Portrait

After studying architecture, Valérie Donzelli started a career as an actress. Her first short film as a director, *Il fait beau dans la plus belle ville du monde* (*Fair Weather in the World's Most Beautiful City*) was selected for the Cannes Film Festival in 2008. Then she filmed *La Reine des pommes* (*Queen of Hearts*), her first feature-length film (Locarno, 2009). Her second feature film, *La Guerre est déclarée* (*Declaration of War*) opened Cannes' International Critics' Week in 2011 and was a great international success. Her third, *Main dans la main* (*Hand in Hand*) was released in France in December 2012. In 2013, she directed a television film *Que d'amour!* (*Just Love!*) in cooperation with the Comédie-Française and Arte Television, which was screened at the Locarno Film Festival. Her fifth full-length feature *Marguerite et Julien* (*Marguerite & Julien*) premiered in the Cannes Film Festival's official selection in 2015. *Notre dame*, which is presented at Locarno's Piazza Grande, is Valérie Donzelli's 6th feature film.

Cast

Valérie Donzelli *Maud Crayon*
Pierre Deladonchamps *Bacchus Renard*
Thomas Scimeca *Martial*
Bouli Lanners *Didier*
Virginie Ledoyen *Coco*
Isabelle Candelier *The Mayor of Paris*
Philippe Katerine *Martin Guénaud*
Claude Perron *Monique Delatour*
Samir Guesmi *Greg*
Pauline Serieys *Agathe*

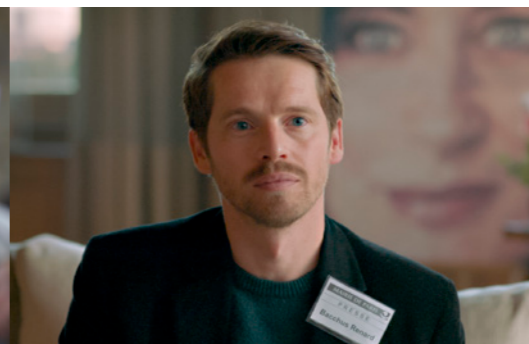
Crew

Director Valérie Donzelli
Screenwriters Valérie Donzelli & Benjamin Charbit
Production Company Rectangle Productions
Producers Alice Girard & Edouard Weil
Director of Photography Lazare Pedron
Production Designer Gaëlle Usandivaras
Editor Pauline Gaillard
Sound Engineer Laurent Gabiot
Sound Editor Valérie Le Docte
Sound Mixer Emmanuel Crozet

Swiss Distributor Frenetic Films
French Distributor Ad Vitam
International Sales Playtime



Maud Crayon > Valérie Donzelli



Bacchus Renard > Pierre Deladonchamps



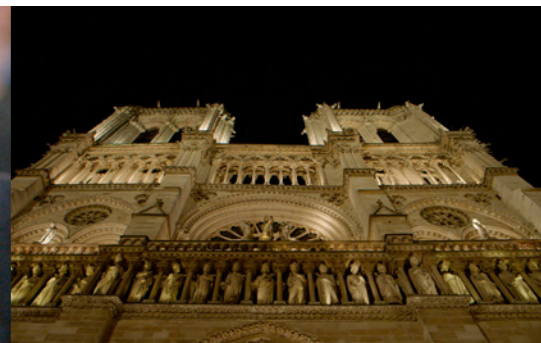
Martial > Thomas Scimeca



Didier > Bouli Lanners



Coco > Virginie Ledoyen



Notre-Dame

Contacts

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