



Happening

a film by
AUDREY DIWAN

A film produced by RECTANGLE PRODUCTIONS



Happening

a film by **AUDREY DIWAN**

Original title: **L'ÉVÉNEMENT**

ANAMARIA
VARTOLOMEI

KACEY
MOTTET-KLEIN

LUÀNA
BAJRAMI

LOUISE
ORRY-DIQUERO

LOUISE
CHEVILLOTTE

Based on the novel L'ÉVÉNEMENT by ANNIE ERNAUX © Édition Gallimard 2000

Special guest stars PIO MARMAÏ SANDRINE BONNAIRE ANNA MOUGLALIS with LEONOR OBERSON and FABRIZIO RONGIONE

Screenplay, adaptation and dialogues by AUDREY DIWAN MARCIA ROMANO

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SYNOPSIS

I got knocked up like a poor girl. This is the story of Anne, a young woman who decides to abort to finish her studies and escape the social constraints of a working-class family. France in 1963: a society that censors women's desires. And sex in general. This simple but cruel story follows the itinerary of a woman who decides to go against the law. Anne has only a little time before her. Her exams are just around the corner, and her baby bump is growing fast...

"THE FILM DOES NOT ARGUE, JUDGE, OR EVEN DRAMATIZE."

A letter from Annie Ernaux

I came out of the screening of *HAPPENING* very moved. The only thing I could say to Audrey Diwan was: "You've made a truthful film".

By truthful I meant as close as possible to what it meant for a girl to become pregnant in the 1960s, when the law forbade and punished abortion. The film does not argue, judge, or even dramatize. It follows Anne's everyday life as a student from the moment she waits for her period in vain until her pregnancy has been terminated. In other words, it is told via Anne's point of view; her gestures, her behavior with others, the way she walks, her silences, all convey this sudden crisis in her life, as her body grows heavier, and she craves foods that will only disgust her. It conveys the unspeakable horror of time passing – as posted on screen in terms of weeks – and the disarray and discouragement when every other solution fails. But it also shows determination to see things through to the end. And when all is said and done, and Anne is once again surrounded by other students, her serene and luminous face reflects her conviction that the future once again belongs to her.

I cannot imagine anyone but Anamaria Vartolomei playing Anne and, in a certain sense, playing me at 23. She is overwhelmingly true and spot-on, as I recall things.

But I do not think that I would have found the film so absolutely true to life, if it had obfuscated what women had recourse to before the passage of the "Loi Veil", the 1975 law decriminalizing abortion in France. Audrey Diwan had the courage to show it in all its brutal reality: the knitting needles, the probe introduced into the uterus by an abortionist. Only such disturbing images can make us aware of the horrors that were perpetrated on women's bodies, and what a step backwards would mean.

Twenty years ago, at the end of my book, I wrote that what happened to me during those three months in 1964 was my body's "total experience" of the times and its morals... The prohibition of abortion and then the new legislation. That is just what Audrey Diwan shows and conveys in her film.



AN INTERVIEW WITH AUDREY DIWAN

What prompted you to adapt Annie Ernaux' novel *HAPPENING*?

I've known Annie Ernaux' work for a long time now: the power of her thought and the purity of her style. But I came late to *HAPPENING*. I was impressed by the dichotomy between the hackneyed formula: back-alley abortion, and the concrete reality of the procedure. My first thoughts were for the body of this young woman, what it must have suffered from the moment she was told she was pregnant. And the dilemma she was faced with. Risk her life and abort, or have the baby and sacrifice her future. Body or mind. I would not have wanted to choose. All those questions were raised concretely in the initial text. I tried to translate them into images: a carnal process that would let me turn the narrative into a physical experience. In a voyage that I hope is possible beyond considerations of period or gender.

Did you discuss your approach to the novel with Annie Ernaux?

Yes, from the start. I wanted both to respect the book and find my own place in it, a narrow but essential path. First, we spent a day together, during which Annie Ernaux agreed to revisit those days in detail. She shed light on the blind spots in the text to give me a more precise idea of the political context, so I would understand the fear that took hold of women the moment they made up their minds. When Annie Ernaux arrived at the precise moment of her abortion, her eyes welled with

itself to its subject. Otherwise, why not make a documentary? With *HAPPENING*, I wanted to probe feelings, to focus on the intimate suspense that increases as the story goes on. As the days go by, the horizon shrinks, and the body becomes a prison. But abortion is not our only subject. My protagonist Anne is a social renegade. She comes from a working-class family. She is the first to go on to university. The faculty ambience feels more bourgeois, with stricter codes and morals. Anne moves back and forth from one world to the other while keeping a secret that could dash all her hopes. At twenty, you are already searching

"I WAS IMPRESSED BY THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN THE HACKNEYED FORMULA: BACK-ALLEY ABORTION, AND THE CONCRETE REALITY OF THE PROCEDURE (...) I TRIED TO TRANSLATE THEM INTO IMAGES: A CARNAL PROCESS THAT WOULD LET ME TURN THE NARRATIVE INTO A PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE. IN A VOYAGE THAT I HOPE IS POSSIBLE BEYOND CONSIDERATIONS OF PERIOD OR GENDER."

tears, as she remembered what society had forced on her as a young girl. I was unsettled by the intensity of her grief. I often remembered this, while writing. And then I asked her to read the various drafts of the screenplay. She helped me to find the most honest approach. And that approach guided me throughout the entire making of... Each post – art design, costumes, makeup – respected those guidelines. And then just before the shoot, Annie Ernaux sent me this quote from Chekhov: *Be accurate, the rest will come in due course.* *

Why adapt this novel today?

I suspect that this question will be raised regularly, which I must say astonishes me. I doubt that the same question is systematically asked of people who decide to do a period film, to deal with a social issue or past politics. And when I use the word "past" I am leaving out all the countries in which the law does not yet permit abortion. *HAPPENING* dwells on a period in our history which is rarely depicted. But as I see it, a film cannot confine

for your place in the world. How do you do that when your own future is permanently at risk?

How did you cast Anamaria Vartolomei, who is in every sequence of the film and often in extreme close-up?

From our first auditions, Anamaria Vartolomei had the right physique for the role. And then there was something else, mysterious, and powerful: her diaphanous skin, her interiorized vision of the world, difficult to decipher and captivating at the same time. She communicates a great deal using minimal means. She is a minimalist actor. I am very sensitive to her kind of delicacy. We began by defining the character in terms of her body. Her posture. I kept repeating: "*Anne is a soldier*", she keeps a low profile, with her feet on the ground, staring straight ahead, ready to take on the world. She needs to live with her renegade status. With what it means to have everyone's eyes on you, with society weighing you down. Anamaria intelligently forged the armor the character required.

**"I DID NOT WANT TO PASS JUDGMENT ON MY CHARACTERS.
I TOOK THEM JUST AS I FOUND THEM :
AS A REFLECTION OF THEIR TIMES."**



Did you talk a lot about abortion?

Yes, that is the decisive fact that makes Anne happen. Throughout the film, there is a conflict between body and mind. Accept the suffering of the one for the salvation of the other. That is an example of the vertical thinking that prompted me to ponder how the heroine defined herself; how she managed to stand on her own two feet. I also saw it as a way of conveying her ambition. What it is like to feel yourself capable of becoming a writer when you are not predestined for it. What allowed this girl to think, to one day formulate the sentence: *"I want to write"*? What does that imply in social terms? My character chooses to have an abortion, and then write the rest of her story. An essential act.

Anne is surrounded by young men. How did you characterize them?

Men, young or less young, are crucial to Anne's development. I did not want to pass judgment on my characters. I took them just as I found them: as a reflection of their times. Jean, a student friend of Anne's (played by Kacey Mottet-Klein), tries to force a kiss on her saying: *"There's no risk, you're already pregnant"*, I see that as complete ignorance of "the other sex" in France in the sixties. In those days, the responsibility for a pregnancy was incumbent upon the woman who became pregnant, and on her alone. The doctors Anne encounters do not all feel the same about abortion. Although there is not one hero among them, no one who resists an unseeing law, not all of them condemn the act. The characters in my film do what they can depending on what they know and how they feel.

**"THE WORD "ABORTION" IS NEVER USED IN THE FILM.
WHAT ANNE IS EXPERIENCING IS TABOO.
SHE REPRESSES HER SUFFERING.
THE STRUGGLE IS INTERNAL."**

Why did you choose the 1.37 aspect ration for this film?

This aspect-ratio allowed me to sidestep the idea of a historical reconstitution and to focus on what was essential. I recognized the possibility of writing the story in the present tense. The camera becomes one with the actress. We rehearsed a lot with Laurent Tangy, our director of photography. The camera was supposed to be Anne, not to look at Anne. He and Anamaria worked hard at walking at the same rhythm, at finding a common rhythm so that the camera movements match her own, but so discreetly that we no longer notice. We wanted the camera to remain in perfect sync with the character. To see what she sees and to follow up on what she sees. The farther she advances, the foggier her trajectory becomes. She leaves the well-beaten medical paths and embarks on shadier byways. The camera then places itself behind her, discovering with her, in real time, what goes on behind locked doors.

Might we say that your direction is immersive?

That is its purpose. The entire crew worked on implementing one idea: bringing together the intimate and 'extimate', being more present in the protagonist's mind as the narrative proceeds. Sound therefore had an important role to play, because at times we are in her thoughts, and at times in a more direct relationship with others. Anamaria's acting depended on several interior monologues with a musical accompaniment. Although I do not think that the term "music" is wholly appropriate here. I was lucky enough to work with Evguéni and Sacha Galperine. I find their compositions very mental. We were not looking for a melody to support or designate

an emotion. We wanted to find notes, some minimalist chords, that operate like words. In a kind of internal phraseology.

Breath is also a very important acoustic element...

This is in fact a film that plays a lot with "breathing". Always with that selfsame idea of plunging into the intimacy of the character. Her sighs of relief are a carnal transcription of her emotions: whatever Anne is holding back when she holds her breath, or when she becomes short of breath. What does it mean to be breathless, or to get a second wind?

After respiration, there is one other very present acoustic element: silence. What does it signify?

Silence is the subject of the film, its point of departure. Nothing must be said. Or heard. The word "abortion" is never used in the film. What Anne is experiencing is taboo. She represses her suffering. The struggle is internal. She is not only pained, but she could also be found guilty by the courts.

Her suffering, both physical and moral, is the focus of some necessarily shocking sequences. How did you approach them?

I won't go on at length about hardcore scenes in the film. I never wanted to shock. But it seemed essential not to look away at such moments. And most of all, to film all the way through, without any cuts. Because I refused theoretical sequences that explain what the protagonist is going through, without experiencing it ourselves.

" MY FILM IS NOT ABOUT LOVE, IT IS ABOUT DESIRE. THE OTHER GRAND SUBJECT OF THE FILM – ONE THAT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR ME - IS CARNAL PLEASURE. ANNE IMPLICITLY FIGHTS FOR HER RIGHT TO PLEASURE. I DISLIKE THE IDEA THAT A WOMAN'S PLEASURE IS ACCEPTABLE ONLY IN TERMS OF HER FEELINGS. IN THAT SENSE, THERE IS A CONTEMPORARY, JOYFUL ENERGY IN ANNE'S STORY. "

The concept of time determines the rhythm of the entire film that plays out like a countdown. Why did you choose to specify the weeks that pass by using onscreen superimpositions?

The original novel used a diary. I often pondered a sentence in the book: *Time was no longer a set of days to be filled with classes and papers, it had become the shapeless thing that was growing within me.* I sensed that urgency via contrasts: the world of carefree students who enjoy the break of day versus Anne's race against the clock.

What is remarkable about this film is its focus on the idea that individuals must have total control over their bodies and souls. Was it to focus entirely on that idea that there is no love story? That the heroine is not in love?

My film is not about love, it is about desire. The other grand subject of the film – one that is very important for me – is carnal pleasure. Anne implicitly fights for her right to pleasure. I dislike the idea that

a woman's pleasure is acceptable only in terms of her feelings. In that sense, there is a contemporary, joyful energy in Anne's story. She feels as much anger as desire.

What counts most in your film is freedom?

For me, freedom in cinema means shattering constraints, something I find even more appealing since my film is so restrained. Anne's story creates a kind of backdraft. That is why it was so important that "*pick up your pens*" be the last words of the film, over the sound of a pen on paper. She herself writes her story, without letting anyone else dictate it to her.





AN INTERVIEW WITH ANAMARIA VARTOLOMEI

**" I ALWAYS REMEMBERED ONE
PHRASE: ANNE IS A SOLDIER.
OFF TO WAR. SHE LOSES ALLIES
ALONG THE WAY. SHE ENDS UP
PROSTRATE. SHE GETS KICKED,
BUT SHE GETS BACK TO HER FEET
(...) ANNE NEVER LOOKS AWAY. "**

How did you become Anne, the heroine of *HAPPENING*?

It all began at my audition with Audrey Diwan and the casting director Elodie Demey. I performed a few key sequences: a scene at the university, the scene in which I learn that I am pregnant, and a scene of socialization, of students flirting. Those sequences were representative of the main emotional states my character would go through. Passing from one to the other was rather demanding work.

How was the novel by Annie Ernaux, from which the film is adapted, enlightening in your work?

I was particularly inspired by her style of writing. Very abrupt, raw, no frills and very precise. You are face to face with reality. Annie Ernaux is a very resolute writer who has contributed greatly to casting light on the status of women. She works for their freedom and self-awareness. As for the heroine in *HAPPENING*, the novel shows that she has desires that she refuses to conceal. She accepts her responsibility completely. The novel was also a great source of inspiration in understanding my character's physical sensations. Pain, for example.

"THIS IS A FILM ABOUT THE LIFE FORCE.

THE CLOSER YOU GET, THE MORE IMMEDIATELY THE HEROINE AND HER FEELINGS ARE COMMUNICATED TO THE AUDIENCE, AND THE MORE INVOLVED THE AUDIENCE FEELS."

How did you prepare with Audrey Diwan?

We talked, we exchanged thoughts. Audrey asked me to watch some films before discussing the construction of my character. Among them, ROSETTA by the Dardenne brothers, which inspired my character's nickname. We called her *"the little soldier"*. Or SON OF SAUL by László Nemes, for its hallucinatory ramblings, the realistic grueling dimension of what the character is going through. But also, BLACK SWAN by Darren Aronofsky, for the mother-daughter relationship. It was less a matter of inspiration than of consulting others. And during our shoot, I thought back to those discussions. I always remembered one phrase: Anne is a soldier. Off to war. She loses allies along the way. She ends up prostrate. She gets kicked, but she gets back to her feet. She keeps going, with her resolute and boundless willpower. Anne never looks away. She always looks straight ahead.

To bring that unwavering and essential resolve to the screen, frames are very tight, the camera always seems to be a few inches away from your character. It never releases her. How did you work out that close osmosis between you, Audrey Diwan, and Laurent Tangy, the director of photography?

We became one body, one entity with three heads. Audrey looked for a visceral dimension. Laurent was always behind me, "over" my shoulder. Under my skin. Following my every move. At the same time, this is a film about the life force. The closer you get, the more immediately the heroine and her feelings are communicated to the audience, and the more involved the audience feels. Sound also had an essential role to play in our approach. Audrey wanted us to hear everything around Anne at first, the ruckus of student life for example. But as we proceed, my character's solitude increases, and the sound changes. We abandon everyone else. The sound becomes more internal. It's a very poetic idea.

Anne is so focused she doesn't seem to have time to smile.

Audrey and I talked about that absent smile. When you are intensely concentrated, you rarely smile. But whenever there was a smile, Audrey wanted it to be dazzling and even more remarkable

due to its rarity. For Anne, what is essential is communicated by her eyes, and not the lower half of her face. I had to use my eyes to convey solitude and fear. Anne has no time to smile. She barely has time to catch her breath. And so, we did work a lot on sound.

Which is to say?

We kept working on sound as an instrument. For example, in one sequence, I had to play fear, increasingly intense physical pain and the sheer force of will power. All at the same time. To help, Audrey had the sound engineer prepare an earphone that transmitted a constant tick tock. I felt like a time bomb. The farther we proceeded, the louder the metronome ticked. That put me into a state of maximal irritation. I felt dizzy. It had a real effect on my way of walking. It shaped my facial expressions.

The story takes place in the 60s. How did you become a girl from that period?

Thanks to rehearsals. People spoke differently in the 60s. There was a specific musicality. My partners Luana Bajrami and Louise Orry Diquerro and I practiced speaking more slowly, articulating more clearly. That play on rhythm made us naturally shift into a different world than today's.

What do you personally retain of all this experience?

Audrey allowed me to feel dizzying self-abandon. Thanks to her, I had no doubts about what I had to do, even in scenes that frightened me. She was an ally in the process of constant artistic exchange. This film taught me to dare and to open myself up. That is why I felt that I had attained a kind of freedom when acting. A freedom that strikes me as being very much in line with Annie Ernaux' text.



AN INTERVIEW WITH LAURENT TANGY

“ AUDREY WANTED TO FIND THE RIGHT TONE WITHOUT BETRAYING THE ORIGINAL TEXT. WE NEEDED TO DEPICT THE EMOTIONS AND STRUGGLE OF THIS WOMAN IN SEARCH OF EMANCIPATION AND FREEDOM IN A WORLD THAT OPERATED ACCORDING TO RULES THAT OPPRESS WOMEN. OUR IMMERSION IN HER LIFE RELIED ON A CAMERA STAYING CLOSE TO HER, ON SEQUENCE SHOTS THAT THRUST THE AUDIENCE INTO HER LIFE. ”

How did your work as director of photography on *HAPPENING* begin?

Audrey and my discussions revolved around a simple idea: she wanted to find the right tone without betraying the original text. We needed to depict the emotions and struggle of this woman in search of emancipation and freedom in a world that operated according to rules that oppress women. Our immersion in her life relied on a camera staying close to her, on sequence shots that thrust the audience into her life. We shared references to photographers such as Jacob Holdt or Todd Hido.

How else did that immersive vision effect the image?

We needed a shoulder camera to dog the heroine's every move. Her reactions and sense of urgency. That meant constraints for our lighting. We needed the freedom to frame all of Anamaria's actions without ever cutting away.

Speak to us about your choice of aspect ratio, a very particular choice.

Audrey had chosen 1.37 before I joined her on the film. She wanted to focus on her character, not as an element of the decor but its center. And so, the audience experiences the events with her. Without anticipating them. It can be surprised at any moment by other people barging into frame. And so, identification with the emotions of this young woman occurs spontaneously.

That presupposes a particular complicity, an osmosis with the actress who plays the lead role, Anamaria Vartolomei. How did you work together?

Work with Anamaria began on set. It took a few days for me to win her confidence, and to experience events with her. I also stayed close to her physically, dogging her footsteps, listening to her breathing. The original idea was to find a common rhythm, something like a dance step that would hide the camera.

Lighting required a particular treatment because films were garishly colorful in the 1960s. And attempts to reproduce that look often transform the film into a museum-like historic reenactment, which is not always very lifelike. How did you avoid that pitfall?

Of course, we did not want to emphasize reenactment. That would have run counter to the philosophy of the project. The idea was to be believable without making the film into a period film, which would have created an emotional distance in the narration. We decided on contemporary lighting. The 60s come across in the set design, costumes, and the characters' way of talking. Not in the way we filmed.

So then what color range did you choose?

Audrey wanted cold colors at the beginning, with an evolution toward warmer tones to underscore a sense of urgency and the impasse in which Anne becomes ensnared.

And when color grading?

Color grading was the sequel to our work on set. To remain "true" to our subject. Being "honest" as Audrey liked to say. Even letting things look raw when necessary.

You must have also worked on the specific intensity of that exterior night light that we see in the film. How would you describe that light?

In much the same way, we wanted to ensure the veracity of our exterior shots. And so, we worked at expressing the emotional quality of Anamaria's environment without making anything look spectacular. The image had to look, not naturalistic but natural, by exaggerating the saturating contrasts just a little.

And for the interior lighting?

Inside, I was motivated by the same idea: remaining faithful to the environment and the story, by reinforcing the reality of existing sources: a light bulb, a traffic light... exaggerating just a little the real source of light to support and better communicate Anne's emotions.

CAST

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| ANNE | Anamaria VARTOLOMEI |
| JEAN | Kacey MOTTET-KLEIN |
| HÉLÈNE | Luana BAJRAMI |
| BRIGITTE | Louise ORRY-DIQUERO |
| OLIVIA | Louise CHEVILLOTTE |
| PROFESSOR BORNEC | Pio MARMAÏ |
| GABRIELLE | Sandrine BONNAIRE |
| CLAIRE | Leonor OBERSON |
| RIVIÈRE | Anna MOUGLALIS |
| GASPARD | Cyril METZGER |
| JACQUES | Éric VERDIN |
| LAËTITIA | Alice DE LENCQUESAING |
| LISE | Madeleine BAUDOT |
| DOCTOR RAVINSKY | Fabrizio RONGIONE |
| MAGDA | Isabelle MAZIN |
| MAXIME | Julien FRISON |
| | of the Comédie-Française |
| PATRICK | Edouard Sulpice |
| CÉLINE | Leïla MUSE |
| DOCTOR GUIMET | François LORQUET |
| FIREMAN | Louis BÉDOT |
| STUDENT IN TELEPHONE BOOTH | Emeline WEICKMANS |
| STUDENT WEARING CAP | Gabriel WASHER |
| STUDENT AT FLEA MARKET | Lomane de DIETRICH |

CREW

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| PRODUCED BY | Édouard WEIL Alice GIRARD |
| DIRECTED BY | Audrey DIWAN |
| SCREENPLAY | Audrey DIWAN Marcia ROMANO with the participation of Anne BEREST |
| DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY | Laurent TANGY - AFC |
| EDITING | Géraldine MANGENOT |
| SET DESIGN | Diéné BERETE |
| COSTUMES | Isabelle PANNETIER |
| MAKEUP | Amélie BOUILLY |
| HAIRDRESSER | Sarah MESCOFF |
| ASSISTANT DIRECTOR | Anaïs COUETTE |
| CASTING | Élodie DEMEY – A.R.D.A |
| CONTINUITY | Diane BRASSEUR |
| LOCATION MANAGER | Gary SPINELLI |
| GAFFER | Olivier MANDRIN |
| KEY GRIP | Thomas VALAEYS |
| SOUND ENGINEER | Antoine MERCIER Philippe WELSH |
| SOUND EDITOR | Thomas DESJONQUÈRES |
| MIXING | Marc DOISNE |
| PRODUCTION MANAGER | Monica TAVERNA |
| POST-PRODUCTION MANAGER | Mélanie KARLIN |
| ORIGINAL MUSIC | Evgueni GALPERINE Sacha GALPERINE |

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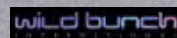
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