

Festival
71^e Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Encounters

MOON

66

QUESTIONS

A FILM BY JACQUELINE LENTZOU





MOON, 66 QUESTIONS

By Jacqueline Lentzou

2021 – 108' – Greece, France – Color – 1.85 – 5.1 – Greek

Synopsis

After years of distance, Artemis has to get back to Athens due to her father's frail state of health. Discovering her father's well-kept secret allows Artemis to understand her father, in a way she was not able before, therefore love him truly for the first time.

CAST

Sofia KOKKALI, Lazaros GEORGAKOPOULOS

CREW

Director: Jacqueline Lentzou

Screenwriter: Jacqueline Lentzou

DOP: Konstantinos Koukoulis

Editor: Smaro Papaevangelou

Music: Delphine Malaussena

Set Design: Stavros Liokalos

Costume Design: Eva Goulakou

Sound: Dimitris Kanellopoulos, Leandros Ntounis, Julien Perez

Production: Fenia Cossovitsa (Blonde S.A)

Co-production Hédi Zardi, Fiorella Moretti (Luxbox)





DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Jacqueline (Athens, 1989) is an artist whose cinematic language involves discovering poetry in – seemingly - mundane premises. Her tools are word and image association, the dream-construct, intuition. She experiments with formats, durations and feelings. Through her work she discusses non-traditional family systems, loneliness, duality and oneness, love, and most importantly, the lack of it.

A London Film School graduate (2013), Jacqueline has written and directed five short films, all of them having a rather successful festival career having premiered at Locarno, Toronto, Berlin, Cannes. She is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards, including the Cine Leica Discovery Award by Semaine de La Critique for *Hector Malot: The Last Day of the Year* (2018).

FILMOGRAPHY

2021 *Moon, 66 Questions* - has participated in Torino Script Lab and was awarded with the CNC Development program. It was also part of Sundance's Screenwriting Workshop & the very first Pop Up Film Residency.

2020 *The End of Suffering* (short)

2018 *Hector Malot: The Last Day of the Year* (short)

2017 *Hiwa* (short)

2016 *Fox* (short)

2013 *Thirteen Blue* (short)

“Coming-of-age” films usually focus on self-discovery. How did you create your main character who balances between her youth and a very strong feeling of responsibility?

“Coming-of-age” films have always confused me, as I see coming-of-age as an ongoing process, rather than an event that magically comes for adulthood. This is why – from the very beginning of its development – I have always pitched the project as the coming-of-age of a relationship, rather than the one of a person only.

Family relationships – even the ones that stand outwardly healthy – are the hardest ones, and this is strictly owed to the fact that they come first: first touch, first song, first lie, first betrayal... It is a great shock to realize that the giver of all these “firsts” is transmuted, whether you consciously remember them or not. He is not your standing father anymore, but instead an heavily sick sir asking to be held.

I wanted to create a character that does exactly the opposite of what you express in your question. She does not keep her balance. She seems to have everything under control in one moment, then in another you are no more certain of her own sanity. This is where outbursts anger and role-plays arrive.

Peace arises when she realizes her own upbringing through her father's secret. Secrets, and especially family secrets, have such power. Mostly invisible. You don't know why you feel something, but you know you feel it. Artemis' biggest act of love is when discovering her father's own truth, she makes him feel accepted, even if it may seem too late. Through loving her father, she loves herself, and this is when coming-of-age only begins.

Astrology is omnipresent in the film (the title, the cards...). Why was it important for you to include it in the narrative outline?

Artemis experiences tremendous agitation. Apart from the obvious source of her angst – which is her father's current state of being –, the larger burden comes from the very fact that she does not know him, and she feels like she has lost her chance to ever know him, given that the disease is degenerative. Is he the same person or not? This is where come the “questions” in the title as well as in the film, this is where stands a constant sense of uneasiness.

Astrology, or better-said “prediction methods”, shines within people with a huge need to believe. Who has a huge need to believe? The suffering one in pain, the one who cannot stand its own reality and looks to the sky for relief. Like Artemis.

I feel that the tarot cards, as well as the subtle parallelism with the moon's phases, stand as a great emphasis on the film's true soul: “I dont know, but I want to know by any means, and I will know at the end, as knowing can prevent pain and sufferings no more.”

It is your third collaboration with Sofia Kokkali. How was it to go with her from short to feature-length film? Did it influence the way you directed the movie?

With Sofia we have developed a very deep friendship. Going from short to another short and then to feature-length or further plans for future ideas only feels natural to both of us. It is obvious that the very fact that we are friends influenced many of my directorial decisions.



6 QUESTIONS TO JACQUELINE LENTZOU



The most important is that I wanted her to be absolutely free. Free in the suffering environment I put her into. Free and natural, so I tried to shoot long takes as to refrain from most filmmaking conventions. In order to forget the camera, we had to forget that we were shooting. This meant minimal to no-light at all, minimal to no-set dressing. At some points, that was closer to shooting a documentary rather than a fiction.

And I got from Sofia many treasures in return. Apart from her extraordinarily powerful performance, Sofia came up with several ideas about her character. From particular actions to general comments that enriched the film, in a way that would not have been possible, if not thanks to her uniqueness.

Lazaros Georgakopoulos' performance is very physical. How did he apprehend the disease? How did you work together? And was there a lot of preparation for this with Sofia as well?

I can vividly remember the first coffee we had with Lazaros discussing Paris character. I was talking non-stop. I was in a fever-like situation describing the disease, how “modern” doctors say it is, how improbable, how inexplicable. Lazaros was quiet, yet moved. I could not understand why. After a pause, he confided in me that he knew very well what I was talking about since he had a very close friend suffering from MS. In one moment, intuitively, I knew he was going to accept, and I also knew he would be the best one to do it.

What really was a catalyst for me in choosing Lazaros was that he immediately understood what lies behind the disease. The emotional burden that can be somatized and result in the deterioration of one's health. It was of

great importance to me, not only to work with a great actor, but to work with a great human being, which Lazaros definitely is.

We worked together through some writings I did, the “Paris’ Diary”. And also a huge inspiration was “A Lover’s Discourse” by Roland Barthes. Paris is nothing but a lover that suffered from his own passion, a passion he was not allowed to openly accept. This was our work in his backstory psychology. Regarding his physicality, everything was achieved through “the Alexander Technique”, a rather special body training that allows non-voluntary muscle movements. He has been closely working for weeks with Vicky Panagiotaki, the only Alexander Technique practitioner that exists in Greece. He and Sofia met on set. I did not want Sofia to know who her father was. Targeting real distance. Real communication difficulty. Real gap. I wanted all Artemis character’s emotions as real as possible. And it worked.

The story is told through Artemis’ diary, why did you choose this narrative process?

Duality in narration was intrinsic to the creation of a girl’s portrait in a limbo, echoing her father’s health limbo. At the same time, being and not being here.

Therefore, the story is told both through Artemis’ diary as well as through watching Artemis’ experience. In the diary you find incidents that you do not see in the film, and in the film you see incidents that are never mentioned in the diary.

I love diaries. I guess it all started with Anne Frank’s diary – the first book I ever read, and a huge influence in my work. Similarly, I love diary films and home videos. There

is something bright and crystal clear about the subject behind the pen and/or the camera – it's the light of honesty.

I did not want to tell her story only by showing her, I had to listen to her thoughts, I had to know which words she picks when she writes, I had to know her worries.

At the same time, I felt that using Artemis' diary against her father's visual diary was a great way to connect them, before they are connected. Listening to her voice, while watching what her then-healthy father had previously shot, creates a meta-space in the film which is where truly lies the dynamic of the films.

Last, diaries, and particularly any date reference in it, always used to remind me of prisoners. Prisoners count down days before being free, and similarly, both characters here try to escape from their own personal prison.

The comescope images, the fixed close ups on the food or the cards... Those elements give different textures to the film. Could you explain this choice, and tell us more about the mise-en-scene?

I had always envisioned the film as a map of Artemis' heart. In a free-streaming process, the word "collage" popped up, and this word eventually became a key-word. What is a collage at the end of the day? A map of an idea, consisting of different pieces of information, different materials, different shapes. This is

the overall umbrella under which the mise-en-scene was created. Different moments in time, during the same summer, different moods, and different textures. The variety echoes the various shades of Artemis' everyday devastation. The various reasons she has to feel hopeless and angry. The various questions she has. Although each and every thing serves its own purpose, what is important to me is how they all blend together. That was a risk to combine what seemed non-combinable: a documentary approach along with stylized tarot cards, long takes of absolute stillness along with VHS imagery depicting memories of a life that used to be rich in stimuli.

The different elements could potentially work well together due to antithesis or complementarity, or both at the same time where antithesis complements one with another. What's liberating for me is that I took the risk. I can't wait to be in a cinema theater with an audience and see if the experiment is a success: reaching its aim of getting a real grasp on Artemis' journey.



INTERNATIONAL SALES

LUXBOX

Fiorella Moretti - CEO, Sales & Acquisitions - fiorella@luxboxfilms.com
Hédi Zardi - CEO, Sales & Acquisitions - hedi@luxboxfilms.com
Marie Lambœuf - Head of Festivals - marie@luxboxfilms.com
www.luxboxfilms.com

INTERNATIONAL PRESS

THE PR FACTORY

Barbara Van Lombeek - barbara@theprfactory.com
Julie Vanderhaeghen - julie@theprfactory.com
Marie-France Dupagne - mariefrance@theprfactory.com
www.theprfactory.com

