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Viviana Andriani
René2009 / 92 min / color / 35 mm / Dolby SRD
graphic design: Nobuhiro Suwa

Yuki, nine years old, learns that her parents are separating. Her father is French, and her mother is Japanese. Now she and her best friend Nina are going to have to follow her mother to Japan, leaving everything behind in Paris, starting with their way of life. The forest will be their new home, a place where they can start again, without their family’s influence.

Higo: I met Suwa in May 2004. He was preparing a film, A Perfect Couple, and wanted to work about the role of the child. We met several times, speaking a great deal, and we enjoyed these conversations. One day I told him about a particular experience I had before even becoming an actor from improvisation work done with young teenagers. I had made some super 8 films, that interested him a great deal. And then I telephoned him to say I would very much like for us to work together. He spoke to me about his desire to write a story together and co-direct it. It was such an unattractive proposition, I accepted immediately. It was crème experience for me, and I liked that.

NE: I have always looked for a deeper involvement and collaboration with the actors in my films, without getting too far. But after all is said and done I was the only one in control. Here, for the first time, I wanted something else.

Higo: Our idea was, from the outset, to be “at the height of the child” and in reference to his or her understanding of the world. We didn’t want to talk about the child’s 

World Sales

France-Japan 2009 / 92 min / color / 35 mm / Dolby SRD

genre: drama

directors: Noé Nanakusa & Nobuhiko Suwa

SYNOPSIS

why we can write from Yuki’s point of view. This one was different. We were discussing something that had already been part of my life. The story of Yuki and Nina was already part of the material I knew. It was a way for me to project myself, to write a character in a way that it was really mine. Also, there was the desire to approach them as a full-fledged outsider, one that is entirely detached from adult influence. For me, it was the desire to write the screenplay, but in the end, rather than speak about the father-daughter relationship, we just needed to realise the child’s vision. The forest, which became a point of passage from one world to the other, also became for us, in the process of making the film, a place where we could come together and co-direct it. It was such a liberating proposition, I accepted immediately. It was crème experience for me, and I liked that.

NE: Yuki’s story could be the reverse angle of the story from my previous film, A Perfect Couple, which already tackled the theme of a couple’s separation. But above all, what interested me was how to show children in a movie, and I was looking for a way to see what we could do with children in film. I believe that generally, children are shown according to an adult’s point of view, the way in which adults interpret them: it’s a vision of children influenced by adults. I wanted to show the child’s point of view in a way that was entirely detached from adult influence. For me, it was the desire to approach them as a full-fledged outsider. The forest, which became a point of passage from one world to the other, also became for us, in the process of making the film, a point of passage, which by way of cinema, became real and exchanged between France and Japan, and I realized that this story had a certain deal of breaking through. I thought that the forest could be a point of passage, which, in its way, becomes a metaphor for healing or recuperation for the film. And so the moment when Yuki is alone on her rock, and suddenly makes the decision to go farther in order to grow up, was improved in the moment, igniting a spark of real life that had been written into the screenplay. When we were shooting in Japan, we were also obliged to change the film because of the weather. To adapt, and to “survive”.

NE: At the beginning, we neither intended to shoot in Japan, nor in a forest. It happened during the process, to the exchanges between France and Japan, and I realized that this story had a sense of dual breaking through. I thought that the forest could be a point of passage, which, in its way, becomes a metaphor for healing or recuperation. The forest also represents a place that would be outside of the family’s social community, a world where children would go alone, without their family’s influence.

Higo: The forest, which became a point of passage from one world to the other, also became for us, in the process of making the film, a “magic” place. We too, Suwa and I, were alone, without points of reference, and searching for our film. And so the moment when Yuki is alone on her rock, and suddenly makes the decision to go farther in order to grow up, was improved in the moment, igniting a spark of real life that had been written into the screenplay. When we were shooting in Japan, we were also obliged to change the film because of the weather. To adapt, and to “survive”. Exactly what happened to Yuki.

children in cinema

Higo: When you see a child, the power of the imagination is incredible. It is something we lose because of reality, because of our lives as adults. Every child is an artist from the start, for he or she is someone who is good at changing reality. Suwa was much more confident that I concerning the character of Yuki’s father. I was nervous because I had worked with children before. Suwa, however, already made images they would see on television, through the characters of American children, cubbed in French. Children, who watch a lot of television models themselves after what they see, much as some actors model themselves after an actor on Actors Studio. Freshness and innocence are things that are very difficult to maintain when you are an adult, or in front of a camera. Yuki was our lucky break. Pretending didn’t make sense to her. She was very direct and modest, but also she was full of confidence and strength. She didn’t get worked up, she would concentrate on her shot, and then a moment later return to her activities. This gives the character a sort of mystery and inner depth that we are never able to break through. She told us that if reality is not completely secret. And I think that the film will reflect this mystery, this imperceptibility that place where we cannot get. As a spectator, if create a desire, we’re attracted to it, we are really sucked into the story.

NE: It is true that, generally speaking, it is difficult to film children. VHNC actors, who are non-professionals, we exchange a few sentences and we understand one another quickly. While for children, for example with Noé Nanakusa, who was directing for the first time, there wasn’t a common language. But what was positive is that it is little girls really understood the film and communication was established on another level than that of language. They well assimilated the film, thought about it, and then thought a lot. More than directing I would say it is their understanding of the film that was essential.

two making a film

Higo: From the beginning I didn’t want on an overly written screenplay, without dialogue. We wanted to work the way Suwa had worked on his other films, a canvas, and successfully create the conditions so that the characters could really improve during the shooting. Miraculously, we got the money to make the film with a very thin screenplay. It must have been fifty pages. Then, directing the film became a new form of writing, this is a new adventure. As the film is predominantly takes place in France, the greatest difficulty was the preparation while we were not together. As I was here in France, my responsibility required me to deal into the film in a much more significant way than I had imagined. When Suwa would come, we could then control our point of view on the film. It was a unique way of writing. We needed to establish a shooting “method”. In order to keep our options open, Halld proved to be very complicated, because you
Hippolyte Girardot, as an actor:

Un monde sans pitié by Eric Rochant / 1989
Le parfum d'Yvonne by Patrice Leconte / 1994
Fort Saganne by Claude Berri / 1986
Prénom Carmen by Alain Corneau / 1984
Le destin de Juliette by Pascale Ferran / 2006
Un conte de noël by Arnaud Desplechin / 2008

Hippolyte Girardot, as a director:

/2001- 2/Duo
/2003- Dans la compagnie des hommes by Arnaud Desplechin
/2004 - Un couple parfait
/2005 - hors la vie by Maroun Bagdagi
/2007- Le voyage du ballon rouge by Nobuhiro Suwa

Nobuhiro Suwa, as a director:

/1997- 2/Duo
/1999- Le voyage du ballon rouge

Noë Sampy, as an actor:

Manon des sources by Claude Berri / 1986
Aline Issermann / 1983

Arielle Moutel, as an actor:

by Pascale Ferran / 2006
by Arnaud Desplechin / 2008

Currently, he's the superintendent of the University of Tokyo Zokei.

He started as an actor with LE DESTIN DE JULIETTE by Aline Issermann. Then, he played with Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Berri, Eric Rochant. In the last few years, he played in the films by Arnaud Desplechin, director. His personal vision of film was coming through. Finally what guided us, Pascale Ferran and Amos Gitaï. YUkI & NINA is his first feature as a director.

Through this first experience behind the camera, I learned collaboration, I better understand my ego, my desire to make films. Doing this work four-handed (not to say many more) has given a complex working process, both physical and intellectual. Rubbed out, shortened, drawn out, moved. It's quite a long and quite a heavy process. For the editing, at the beginning the idea was that I would do a rough cut with my team in Japan, and then I would send the result to the French team. There was a lot of going back and forth, it was a very long and arduous process.

Co-directing was a great experience for me. When I see the film now, there are moments that I still can't understand, things that I would never have imagined in this way. But that is possibly also what happened to her? What is important to her?

During the shooting phase, the simplest idea finally, was that one of the directors would take charge. And this is exactly what happened. There wasn't an area reserved for one or the other. In any case, the first day was set up as follows: Is it Yuki or Nina? It is more like painting where, little by little, something appears. It is not just a stroke, but the same thing started over again, what I want to do.

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