



Berlinale
69th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Generation

Daniel

A film by Marine Atlan

World sales

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Daniel

A film by **MARINE ATLAN**

With **THÉO POLGAR, MADELEINE FOLLACCI, TRISTAN BERNARD**

2018 / France / color / 60 min



Synopsis

While his classmates are getting ready for the rehearsal of the end-of-year show, Daniel, 10 years old, gets lost in the school corridors. He catches Marthe changing in the dressing room.

Between the two children a new relationship will be forged.



Director's statement

I wanted *Daniel* to be a suspenseful film where sighs of childlike pleasure take our breath away.

The harsh endless wind transports the emotions of Daniel, an 11-year-old boy caught up in something imminent. But what? What danger? An abstract one that transforms fear into anguish. Hazy and insidious, like the state of emergency that fills the clouds with acid rain and ends up infiltrating the children's imaginations.



The abstract attack is an echo of this unsettling strangeness that gradually gains ground, nourishing the monsters of the subconscious.

Filmed at Daniel's level, with an arrhythmical degree of consciousness that was not entirely in time with him – occasionally allowing myself a slight lead over his sentiments – I wanted to question the child's fear. The fear of a child confronted with his

desire. For faced with fear, there is desire too. And they're carried along in the same breath, setting off heavy breathing, outbursts, pleasure and desire, a devastating flow that streams out of the child despite himself.

The two forces work like communicating vases in the film. In raptures over Marthe's gestures, Daniel escapes from the school which has become unsettling. But his desire generates shame as well. When Daniel's vision becomes sexualized, the world reflects an image of perversion. He will have to destroy this shame, like he must try to destroy his anguish. It is only by affirming his desire – and affirming it publicly – that the child will free himself. He impacts the world by the force of his identity.

Unsettling strangeness

The escalation of Daniel's anguish takes shape in the form a biased perception of the school space. When the little boy starts wandering through the building corridors, the camera accompanies this fear with powerful images that slip into the

subconscious. The school becomes a mental, maze-like space.

The harsh, excessive cold punctuates the child's anguishes and dreams. A blend of gentle snow and brutal wind, the cold becomes the language of an unknown monster. But it is also thanks to the bare winter trees, filmed like an unsettling presence after the fashion of the surrealists, that *Daniel* is able to glide toward a strange dream-like world.

The goal of the whole first part is to make the child feel vulnerable via the crumbling ground and certainties that disappear, giving way to a feeling of despair. Filming despair is filming the subconscious mind. Like a Polanski who introduces menace through daily details, this mechanism gets stuck on minute events, giving the film its melody. This mechanism of uncertainty opens the way to barely perceptible phantoms and monsters, indications of the child's imagination populated by powerful and destructive fears.





Solitary daydreams

The heart of the film – when Daniel observes the half-naked Marthe – was designed like a poem hidden in the heart of torments. The young boy's observation is gentle, but this does not make it any less intrusive or powerful. Marthe becomes an object of fantasy, and unknowingly offers herself to this innocent and sexual eye. To capture the full poetic weight of this childish voyeurism, it was important to make the beauty of Marthe's nudity a pure harmony of form, sensual colors and movements. This pictorial dance, this new and secret pleasure must delight and transform Daniel. I tried to give the scene a pictorial esthetic quality close to that of a Pierre Bonnard, for example when he paints the nude body of his companion Marthe.

These fantasies guide the film and are ultimately Daniel's refuge in the dark auditorium, where they are expressed through singular visual and sound effects. Superimposing images of nature over the image of Marthe, I wanted to maintain one same line: after the despair of winter, nature implacably gives birth to two faces

of one same sentiment of the sublime. The naked girl is explored by Daniel like a valley where children play.

This sensitive foray into his imagination is what enables the viewer to understand the deep emotions that Daniel experiences. I wanted these solitary daydreams to be permeated with a certain lyricism of which the film, *Song of Love*, by Jean Genet seems to me most representative. It is moreover Jean Genet whom I address directly in the last song of the film, which was adapted from one of his poems.

The breathless body and the breath of rumor

A clumsy love comedy, horror film and musical comedy all at once, the film weaves a plot that accelerates and closes in on Daniel's secret. With the cruelty proper to childhood, the class wants to force the guilty party to confess and their dancing mingles with the spreading rumor. Between curiosity and humiliation, the collective body reacts to this event in a manner equal to what this incursion into the carnal realm provokes inside each one of them.



The breath becomes that of the entire class. The rumor going round, the malicious gossip, the breathlessness...

To express this acceleration, this spreading flow, and to illustrate the fragmentation of Daniel's identity, the camera's point of view becomes far more variant after the voyeurism scene. Drawing closer, one by one, to the moods of Marthe, Colin and Aurélien, the film shatters and multiplies: the story is troubled by a collective contagion. Desire and fear spread wherever they can.

Impressionism

I also wanted this to be a childhood chronicle, close to the cinema of Pialat or Rozier. Dismantling the narrative structure somewhat to serve strong impressions, I believe I manage to attain, via this angle, something that belongs to this particular age, something that would be weaker with a too-precise narration. The story, elliptic, tries to capture the children's force of gesture and power of words with as much authenticity as possible.

To attain this fleeting aspect, my directing style was often close to that in my previous film, Green Romances: a reduced crew and timeframe, and no script, the idea being to attain a form of liberty – not pure improvisation, rather a form that resembles a game. I frame my shots, which enables me to react quickly to propositions made by the young actors. In all the group and dance scenes, I was in their midst, directing them at the same time as the scene took place, composing the filming live with instinctive gestures. wse déroule, composant le filmage en direct, par un geste instinctif.

Marine Atlan



Cast

Théo Polgár : Daniel

Madeleine Follacci : Marthe

Tristan Bernard : Colin

Aurélien Gabrielli : Aurélien

Emmanuelle Cuau : La Maîtresse

Crew list

Director **Marine Atlan**

Screenplay **Marine Atlan** - In collaboration with **Anne Brouillet**

Image **Benoit Bouthors, Marine Atlan**

Director assistant **Julia Canarelli**

Sound **Elisha Albert, Paul Guilloteau**

Set designers **Louise Le Bouc Berger, Elsa Noyons**

Costumes **Francisco Terra**

Editing **Guillaume Lillo**

Music **Jonas Atlan**

Sound editing **Agathe Poche**

Mixing **Clément Laforce**

Grading **Gadiel Bendelac**

Casting **Jennifer Lumbroso**

Production Manager **Lucie Bouilleret**

Production coordinator **Maud Berbille**

Producer **Nicolas Anthomé - bathysphere**



Biography - Marine Atlan

Graduated from La Fémis, Marine Atlan is director of photography and director. She was DOP on Louise Hémon's films, Benoît Bouthors's, Caroline Poggi's and Jonathan Vinel's. Her first film *Les Amours Vertes* won the Great Prize at Clermond Ferrand Film Festival.



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