

STUBBORN

(UNE HISTOIRE AMÉRICAINE)

A FILM BY ARMEL HOSTIOU



BOCALUPO FILMS PRESENTS

VINCENT
MACAIGNE

KATE
MORAN

MURRAY
BARTLETT

SOFIE
RIMESTAD

AUDREY
BASTIEN

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SYNOPSIS

Vincent follows Barbara to New York out of love. But she doesn't want him anymore. Stubborn, he decides to do anything to win her back.



AN INTERVIEW WITH ARMEL HOSTIOU

The project began with an encounter with Vincent, who I had met through Guillaume Brac when he was working on his short film *Le naufragé* (2009). I was working on my first feature film, *Rives*, and among other things I was looking for an actor to play a small part, a man who gets into an argument with a delivery guy. Vincent told me this had just happened to him that very day, I found that funny so I gave him the part and we shot the sequence in a day. After that I thought to myself that it would be interesting to develop a project with him. I had a scenario for a short film that was to be shot in France in the Pays de la Loire because the region was subsidizing the film. Unfortunately, Vincent was not available for this but only later, at a time when I was supposed to be in New York to direct a video with a choreographer I knew. That's how we started talking about making a movie there. Obviously a new setting meant a new scenario. Vincent was presenting a play in Grenoble, I met up with him there, and we worked for several nights over there on a new story line, which we finished on the plane. We left with a very small crew, the sound engineer, Romain Le Bras, the director of photography, Mauro Herce, joining us from Barcelona; Kate Moran was already in New York and we thought we'd find the other actors on site. The film arose from the energy of that trip. We were all shackled up in the same place, sort of far out. Everything we went through could potentially go into the movie.

HOW LONG DID YOU STAY THAT TIME?

Twenty-or-so intense days. When you work with a small team the great thing is the ease with which you can just start shooting off the cuff. We had two cameras. The bigger one we used for scenes that were really planned out. The snatched scenes we shot with a Canon 7D, which is originally meant for photography. It often turned out to be a more discrete and less intimidating way to proceed. We had very few people who said they didn't want to be on film. Everything happened very simply. The police stopped by one day because the shooting had drawn a small crowd, I told them we were making a short film and they said ok guys, great, keep going. New York is really an ideal location for this kind of shooting, people are used to it and they often go along naturally and gracefully. It shows in the film's very first sequence, an encounter with a man selling DVDs in the subway, which we shot on the very day we arrived in New York. We'd left our things where we were staying and we'd taken the subway to go walk around in Manhattan. We came across this person selling DVDs who Vincent shows a picture to, on his phone, of the girl he's trying to win back. That was the leitmotiv: a guy showing his phone to the people he passes by, calling on a whole city to witness his emotional distress.

OTHER THAN THIS CHANCE CAST, HOW DID YOU MEET THE REST OF THE ACTORS?

It was Kate who introduced us to Murray Bartlett, a good friend of hers, an Australian actor who since then has become well-known for playing one of the main roles in the HBO series *Looking*. To play the part of Vincent's friend who he meets in New York, I had first been talking to Eleonore Hendricks, because I'd seen her and liked her in the Safdie brothers' movies, but she was all tied up. One night we went by the Lee Strasberg Academy, a drama school, and that's how we met Sofie Rimestad, a Danish actress who was just in New York for a short stay, and it worked out perfect. There's also Audrey Bastien, who plays Vincent's sister, she's also a stage actress, and she was in New York at the same time we were. Jean Lebreton, a French photographer who lives in New York, plays the father.

THE FIRST TIME YOU'RE GOING TO NEW YORK, DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFIC AMERICAN REFERENCES IN MIND? YOU MENTIONED THE SAFDIE BROTHERS.

The spirit of some of their movies had struck me, the enthusiasm they put into their work, *The Pleasure of Being Robbed* especially. But the idea was rather to play with the fact of being French in a very peculiar city, an exceptional place in the United States, where people from all around the globe are brought together. When you get there, it's not quite America that you find: as a stranger you're always a little bit of a New Yorker. Which is why my love for this city often goes to what's not specifically American. And I think that in the



same way New York cinema these past years is steeped in European cinema, French cinema in particular. After we shot the film I stayed in New York for a while to work on the dance video project. When I went back to France, the release of *Rives* kept me busy for a few months. Then I started editing the New York footage with Nicola Sburlati and what came out of it was the short film *Kingston Avenue*, which was shown at festivals and was then bought by the Arte network, allowing us to pay back what we'd borrowed to fund the project. But I was still under the impression that there was more to be done with this material. I told myself that it was worth setting up a second shoot in order to make a feature film. I re-wrote that second part with Vincent and Léa Cohen, a scriptwriter friend, and we left for New York again with the same crew. The first shoot had taken place in the winter of 2012 and the second started in the summer of 2013.

AT THAT TIME, ONE MAJOR ISSUE IS THAT VINCENT'S APPEARANCE IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT WAS FOR THE FIRST SHOOT.

Yes, in the meantime Vincent had lost a lot of weight. But I thought that that went with the story, with this character inside who something has been broken. There's an ellipsis between the two parts, it's unclear how much time it spans, but we come to understand that he has settled here and that he's unable to move on. Something of the tenderness he elicited has vanished. The movie had to be re-worked into a whole, taking into account this temporal, narrative and dramatic disruption. Vincent is as voluble in the first part as he is quiet in the second.



VISUALLY ALSO THE FILM SEEMS TO LOSE SOME OF ITS SOFTNESS, IT IS MORE BLUNT AND SATURATED.

It's the same camera but we added other optics. The difference also comes from the fact that we were now shooting during the summer and mostly in daytime. At the beginning of September, the climate is very different. New York is a city defined by the contrast between seasons, and I wanted the time lapse and the ellipsis that goes with it in the movie to be signified visually and to be felt physically.

WHAT IS IT WITH THE MOTIF OF OBSESSION, OBSESSIVE FEAR, STUBBORNNESS, THAT RESONATES WITH YOU?

The film's title in English is *Stubborn*. Obsession is something that really speaks to me. Not only because you really need it to make movies. Not only obsession in love. I liked the idea that obsessing over this woman was also obsessing about a place, a space. When obsession crosses over into pathology, when stubbornness goes from being comic to tragic. This is something that Vincent handles and plays beautifully. New York is a city where human relations are deeply codified and these codes are mainly honored. The idea was to invent a figure who confronts these codes the way one might bang his head against the wall to test its resistance. More broadly, this also brings us to the issue of insanity as something that is determined by the individual's relationship to society.

Some people's madness is integrated with social norms, up to the point where it stops appearing as such: to be mad for power, political power for instance, this is something that can be completely accepted by society. The opposite happens when you're madly in love, the character's obsession tries to bend social prescriptions. It's what you see in several scenes, among which the scene of the marriage proposal, which would be a lover's duel if the rivalry wasn't one-sided. At that point in the film, we really have to admit that our good will towards Vincent's character was excessive. Here, Vincent's only true power is the power to be a nuisance. The stubborn type then becomes a comedy type, almost burlesque, sort of like some of the roles Kitano himself plays in his movies, like in *Sonatine* or *Kikujiro*. You create a conflictual and poetic relationship with social reality. The more codified a society is, the more fun you can have with the situation.

CAN WE SAY THAT, LITTLE BY LITTLE, VINCENT BECOMES A NEW YORKER?

Yes he becomes one gradually within the film. Clearly he's someone who won't be leaving. Who can't or won't leave. He's going to stay in New York and toil away at that wholesale fish shop in the Bronx. I wanted him to end up burying himself in work, like an automaton, where work becomes the only reason to live. Ice, the empty eyes of dead fish, these were very cinegenic. I also had in mind the figure of Sisyphus, with the notion of divine punishment. Like in King Vidor's *The Crowd*, where the characters suddenly realize they're nothing more than cogs in a city that's stronger than them.



CONVERSATION BETWEEN ARMEL HOSTIOU & VINCENT MACAIGNE

VINCENT MACAIGNE : While I was watching the movie again I was thinking that really New York has gradually grown closer to Paris. Today it's a city that seeks its own preservation. That draws it mentally and geographically closer to us. This city that was emblematic of success is no longer the part of the world where you would think to go to succeed. This is not a melancholy lament, it's just a realization that it's lost some of its appeal, kind of like Paris, and that all that's left is a facade. The fact of going over there has nothing to do with the American dream anymore. In a sense it's got more to do with Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, this idea of the romantic hero trying to fulfill his destiny in a city and who ends up losing himself in it. I think New York has something in common with the Paris of that time, something devoid of appeal or energy, sort of a muddled place, as if all possibilities were muddled. I get the feeling that this is what New York has become for the rest of the world. It's a city that's evolving to stay what it is. When you go to Rio, you can feel the world that is to come more than in New York. Night falls the same way on Paris and on New York, quietly, whereas in Rio there's a sense of danger somewhat, of another reality settling in. But Paris is starting to change

with the crisis, at night you can feel people lurking, there's a violence that is building up. At least for me the movie is about that, about what New York has become. A lot of the scenes have been determined by the decision to rush to New York. The subway scene at the beginning for example, it's the first night we were over there, it's even the first time we're taking the subway in New York.

ARMEL HOSTIOU : And of all the scenes, it's one of those where you're the most enthusiastic. We can tell that your relationship to the city is still fresh. This scene could not have gone into any other moment of the movie, we wouldn't have understood your state of mind.

V.M : The whole trip provided us with opportunities for potential scenes. I'm thinking of the Polish bar we liked... How did we end up there?

A.H : We'd gotten lost in Williamsburg, we were supposed to meet a friend at a bar nearby. We had just begun the shooting, I don't think we'd found Sofie yet—once we found her, everything unfolded more naturally. But I really like these first scenes because we were still at a stage where adjustments had to be made which gave us latent periods which we could take advantage of to invent, improvise. We ended up in this Polish bar by chance. We shot the scene with the guy by the door who asks if you're German, and the one with the old cowboy you dance with. Then we met our friend in this Brooklyn bar called Manhattan, that's where we shot the scene with the girl who tells you you're a bit boring.



V.M : We didn't always warn people. Sometimes we told them. But New York makes that sort of thing easy, people don't seem to find it strange at all. We asked them to stand here or there, we took the camera out, and often they would go along. There are a lot of scenes we didn't keep. There was a scene we'd tried to make for instance with the landlord of the place we were renting.

A.H : He was driving us mad by refusing to give us our deposit back until the very last day, and since we were seeing a lot of him we offered him the part of a disagreeable landlord.

V.M : But what matters more than this or that scene is the gesture of filming which provides situations that you wouldn't have otherwise.

A.H : Yes, for instance in the jewelry store, the saleswoman who hands you the ring and "Congratulations", she was the one who played that part and it was perfect.

V.M : We had also shot a scene with a bum who showed us his war injuries.

A.H : A veteran who'd been ravaged by the war in Iraq, he was missing a leg. He was showing us his stump and his scars. I tried to put the scene in when we were editing but it created something so dark that it twisted the whole story.



V.M : I did like the idea, given that I'm not a big fan of New York, that the city be slightly terrifying. We don't quite agree on this. I feel that there's no tenderness. There are only few moments when New Yorkers get to me. In Paris, and in France in general, people are more capable of receiving each other. By talking about their anxiety, etc. Me for instance, when I'm anxious, I start talking about intimate stuff with everybody, it's not cool but still, there's somebody listening. With New Yorkers, you feel as if something just froze, as if you were trespassing on their lives.

A.H : That's what's so funny about the old Polish bar scene. You tell him you feel hopeless, he answers by asking you if you're German. There's an expression over there that sums up all these officious social laws, especially in romantic relationships: the dos and don'ts. The existence of these rules also shows that relationships are more codified. Here they are as well but the rules are tacit, unsaid. I get the feeling that much of the fascination that Americans have for the French is based on that vagueness which is considered as something very romantic, a way to suddenly defy the rules.

V.M : What's interesting is how my character totally misses Sofie. You can even say that he hasn't really seen her. He probably told himself that it would keep him busy for one night. The whole movie says something could have happened, and only the hero doesn't see it. At some point, she even starts to annoy him.

A.H : It's what creates something interesting, dialectical, for the audience: we want to tell the hero to look from another angle, that he's going to miss the one story that would've been worth it.

V.M : It goes contrary to other parts I played. In Tonnerre (Guillaume Brac) for instance, where the character is obsessed with the girl who comes into his life. Here he's not even capable of seeing her. There is no way he wants to hang on to others. The movie could have ended with Sofie who for instance would've gone on to study, they would've lived together, a wholesome moral ending. There's a mystery in him that doesn't seem to be dispelled. Often I would be reminded of Nietzsche. I would tell myself, who knows, maybe this guy is Nietzsche, with high ideas about something that isn't love. With this kind of character, you shouldn't necessarily understand the movie as a love story or a story about jealousy. In the end, this guy isn't even really jealous. His endgame, we're not even sure it's to win her back; if he does, it's not at all certain that he'll be satisfied.

A.H : Up to the point where you can ask yourself whether he doesn't find pleasure in suffering. If his pleasure isn't to suffer and cause suffering.

V.M : That's why I like that his father and sister come visit him. It points to a decline that is social even more than emotional. For me, this film is not just a love story, more importantly it's the story of someone who's stalled. The character had to remain mysterious, we had to know as little as possible about him. Only enough to figure that at one time he was in France and he lost his footing. It makes us all the more scared of what awaits him, and of the way in which something intimate can overturn something socially.



ARMEL HOSTIOU

Armel Hostiou was born in Rennes in 1976. After graduating from La Femis Film School in Paris, he went on to direct experimental films and music videos. Several of his short films were distinguished at french and international film festivals. His first feature-length film *Rives* (english title *Day*) premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2011, in the ACID Selection. It also received the «curator's choice» label at BAM's Salut les jeunes! Young French Cinema program..

FEATURE FILMS

Une histoire américaine
(eng.title STUBBORN), 2015
Rives (eng.title DAY), 2011

SHORT FILMS

Kingston Avenue, 2013
Clermont Ferrand IFF, Competition
Anticyclone, 2011
Contre temps, 2005
MEDIA Audience Award FFAT Film Festival Munich 2006
Chorus, 2004

EXPERIMENTAL FILMS

Duende, 2014
Opening of Musée de Picasso
Contre temps, 2005
Flota, 2012
Artist Residency in EMPAC, Troy, NY
Traces, 2008
« Dans la nuit, des images »
exhibition in Grand Palais Paris
(curated by Alain Fleisher)
World Was on Fire and no one could save me but you, 2008
Audience Award - Metacafe Film Festival
San Francisco 2009
Kino, 2005
Jury Award - Independant Exposure San Francisco 2006
SoLoS, 2003 (graduate film)
Best expérimental film, Tel Aviv Film Festival 2004



VINCENT MACAIGNE

Vincent Macaigne is an artist who breaks all frontiers. After graduating from the prestigious Conservatoire National d'Art Dramatique in Paris, he went on to work in both film and theater as a writer, director and actor. In 2007, his play *Requiem 3* premiered at the «Bouffes du Nord», a mythical venue owned by Peter Brook. But it was after his staging of the play *Idiot!* inspired by Dostoievski's novel, in 2009, that he became a favorite of the French theater scene. The same year, he was invited to the Avignon Theater festival to present his play *Au moins j'aurai laissé un beau cadavre* (*At least I would have left a nice corpse*), an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and his short film *Ce qu'il restera de nous* (*What will be left of us*) won the Grand Prix at the Clermont Ferrand International Film Festival. Since 2013, Vincent Macaigne has starred in critically appraised movies directed by young French directors : *2 automnes, 3 hivers* (*2 autumns, 3 winters*) by Sebastien Betbeder, *La bataille de Solférino* (*The Age of Panic*), by Justine Triet, *Tonnerre*, by Guillaume Brac and *Eden* by Mia Hansen Love. He co-wrote *Stubborn* with Armel Hostiou and stars as the main character, also named Vincent.

MURRAY BARTLETT



Murray is best known for his starring role on the hit HBO series *Looking* where he stars alongside Jonathan Groff. Prior to this, Murray had roles on *Guiding light*, *Sex & The City*, *White Collar*, *Flight of the conchords*, and very memorably opposite Glenn Close on the critically acclaimed series *Damages*. In the feature world Murray played the lead role of “Troy” in the Eldar Rapaport-helmed *August*, appeared opposite Kristen Wiig and June Diane Raphael in *Girl Most Likely* as well as opposite Geoffrey Rush in *Dad and Dave*. A *Nida* Graduate, Murray has performed for The Sydney Theatre Company (*Les parents terribles*, *Titus Andronicus*), the Queensland Theatre Company (*A Winter's Tale*) and originated the role of “Greg Connell” opposite Hugh Jackman in the Australian Tour of *The boy from OZ*. On Australian television he memorably played “Luke” in *Neighbors*, “James Brogan” alongside Yvonne Strahovski in *Headland*, and “Nick” in *The secret life of us*.

KATE MORAN

Kate began studying classical dance at a young age before turning her focus to contemporary theatre. While at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts Experimental Theatre Wing, she began working with the paris based company SideOne Posthume Theatre under the direction of Pascal Rambert and the brooklyn based company GAleGates et al. under the direction of Michael Counts. Over the years she has continued working with both directors on various projects; as well as around the world with such notable artists as Thierry De Peretti, Jan Fabre, Yves-Noel Genod, Oriza Hirata,

Christophe Honore, Bob McGrath, Gilles Paquet-Brenner, among others. In 2014 she did the world tour of Robert Wilson and Philip Glass' iconic *Einstein on the Beach*, the latest films Kate Moran starred in were Peter Greenaway's latest film *Goltzius and the Pelican Company*, Yann Gonzalez' first feature film, *Les rencontres d'apres minuit*, Bernad

Bonello's *Saint Laurent* or Paul Favrat's *Boomerang*. She has recently been naturalized and holds a dual citizenship between France and the U.S. She divides her time between the two.



STUBBORN

[UNE HISTOIRE AMÉRICAINE]

A FILM BY ARMEL HOSTIOU

STARRING

VINCENT MACAIGNE

KATE MORAN

SOFIE RIMESTAD

SCRIPT

ARMEL HOSTIOU

VINCENT MACAIGNE

IN COLLABORATION WITH

LÉA COHEN

EDITING

CAROLE LE PAGE

SOUND MIX

SIMON APOSTOLOU

MURRAY BARTLETT

AUDREY BASTIEN

JEAN LEBRETON

DOP

MAURO HERCE

SOUND

CLÉMENT MALÉO

ROMAIN LE BRAS

PRODUCTION

BOCALUPO FILMS

GAELE RUFFIER

JASMINA SIJERCIC

