



62^e SEMAINE
DE LA CRITIQUE
CANNES 2023

THE RAPTURE

(LE RAVISSEMENT)

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THE RAPTURE

(LE RAVISSEMENT)

A FILM BY **IRIS KALTENBÄCK**

WITH **HAFSIA HERZI, ALEXIS MANENTI, NINA MEURISSE, YOUNÈS BOUCIF**

97 MIN - FRANCE



S Y N O P S I S

Lydia, a midwife highly invested in her career, has completely lost control of her life.

Was it due to heartbreak, her best friend Salomé's pregnancy, or her meeting with Milos, with whom she could have a potential new relationship?

Lydia gets stuck in a spiral of lies where everyone's life is turned upside down.

DIRECTORS' INTERVIEW

How did you become a film director?

When I was a teenager, I wanted to become either a filmmaker or a criminal lawyer. I initially studied law, while working for a criminal lawyer, and that was when I developed my love of cinema. At the time, I harbored a true passion for Kieslowski, whose screenwriter was a lawyer. I remember one of my teachers, who used to tell us: "if you want to know the condition a society is in, go visit the criminal courts." I did. And I quickly realized that I wanted to address the passionate feelings that drive and tear people apart through a means other than law.

So I took the Fémis competitive entry exam. And because I love inventing stories, I naturally opted for the screenwriting specialization. Little by little, I also learned to direct—with short films, then by participating in the Émergence Resident Artist Program, by assisting a stage director, and rubbing shoulders with seasoned directors thanks to my work as a screenwriter and project manager for a production company (Why Not Productions), and finally with this first feature film, which has been my richest learning experience so far.



Can you tell me about the film's origins?

I was preparing my short film, *A Visit From The Stork*, when I stumbled upon a short, two-line news item in the newspapers: a young woman borrowed her best friend's child and led a man to believe she was the mother. That was what sparked the idea in my mind of narrating the upheaval of a friendship and the beginning of a love story based on the same lie.

I drew from my past experiences in courtrooms the conviction that short news items often tell us about the frictions experienced by society at a given time. They reflect, on an intimate scale, broader political issues.

How did you elaborate the screenplay using this plot as your starting point?

What instantly struck me was the friendship you imagine between the two women. I personally experienced this strange out of synch feeling a few years ago when a very close friend of mine became a mother at a moment when I personally didn't feel concerned by anything having to do with motherhood. We talk a lot about what happens in a couple upon the arrival of a child, but very little about how it can impact a friendship.

The other question raised by this news item was the notion of pretense and appearances in a budding love story. Even though this lie is simply enormous, I felt that the situation

could resonate with a lot of people. Almost all of us have one day or another doctored reality to appeal to someone or present a version of ourselves that we believe to be more desirable.

You bring these ideas to life through a trio of very sharp characters...

My wish to make a film often stems from the characters, and for *The Rapture*, it was indeed specifically these characters who made me want to write this story. Lydia, a midwife who is dedicated to her profession, evades what makes her vulnerable, walling herself up in solitude and lies. Her lifelong friend, Salomé, who first seems better integrated with a life that is solidly on track, is confronted with the upheaval that

motherhood is, and the violence of post-partum loneliness. And then there's also Milos, a bus driver who is a first generation immigrant from ex-Yugoslavia, whose life follows the rhythm of the night shift and who doesn't particularly envision a future for himself until he meets Lydia.

Motherhood is a theme that runs through both your short film and your first feature film.

I've always found stories in which motherhood is thwarted or incongruous profoundly touching: whether it is a woman who becomes a mother but doesn't feel what is generally expected, or a woman who is not a mother but develops feelings and a behavior usually ascribed to a mother and blossoms



as such. This news item made me ponder over our definition of motherhood and the ways in which mythology has shaped the concept throughout History. This has made me think about the judgement of Solomon, but also about the story of the Virgin Mary.

Your film also broaches the mythologies that surround the iconography of the mother with a child in her arms.

The lie imposes itself for Lydia the moment she embodies the clichéd image of motherhood. She loses herself in the gaze of others. She is extremely lonely, suffers madly from her need to be loved, and the perception Milos has of her changes instantly when he sees her as a mother – his eyes fill with tenderness and care. Lydia is

swallowed up by this way of being seen. It is the starting point of an endless lie. Wanting to believe in a fantasized version of oneself is something that everyone experiences, I believe, though perhaps in less spectacular proportions, in moments of seduction.

So it is a lie that stems from a misunderstanding?

Yes. I wanted to show how a young woman gets bogged down in lies, but also how the lie initially came from a truth. How it allows her to achieve a kind of genuineness in the relationship. It was very important to create a confusion and a stir in this respect: real feelings actually sprout and grow out of her initially being sublimated into a mythical persona.

At which point did a documentary approach appear natural to film the scenes in which we follow Lydia in her everyday work as a midwife?

One of the first questions that caused much concern for Marine Atlan, my cinematographer, and myself was how to depict motherhood in today's cinema? I wanted to film the physical ordeal that giving birth is and wonder about what it is to be enraptured the first time a mother lays eyes on her child. I had no preconceived ideas about what that is supposed to look like, and I had no interest in directing an actress to appear this way or that way. I wanted to film a midwife's work and her close collaboration with the mother to bring her child into the world, with

documentary precision, without words or explanations.

While filming this documentary part, we followed entire shifts without having the slightest idea of what was going to happen. It was a long and trying bout of work; we became acutely aware of the midwives' working conditions, the insane number of hours piling up during their shifts. I felt that showing this profession through its gestures was the most visual and cinematographic approach. I wanted to film the midwife's gestures as they amplify, leading up to the culminating moment of birth.

How did you make the documentary sections fit into the film, which for its part is very obviously a fictional story?

I wanted to distance myself from the news item's grittiness and with the audience give in to the sheer pleasure of the narrative while managing to instill as much of reality as possible into the fiction. Together with the crew, the actors and actresses, we all worked on blending and blurring genres, sprinkling fiction into the documentary and realness into the fictional sections. I therefore asked Hafsia Herzi to join us and be in the documentary shoot. She actually established a bond with the mothers, dispensed the care she could under the supervision of a midwife. On the other hand, we also filmed the fictional passages of the film with a pared-down crew, always on the move, in natural scenery. We immersed Hafsia in the streets of Paris because I wanted to film the city where

I grew up in the most spontaneous and realistic way possible.

Can you tell us about the trio of actors and actresses?

I hugely admired Hafsia Herzi, whom I'd discovered in *The Secret Of The Grain*, and enjoyed seeing again in *You Deserve A Lover*. I remember that when we first spoke, I had so much to say, I wanted to share all my thoughts with her but very quickly she stopped me and said: "Don't worry, I understand all of it, I understand Lydia perfectly." That defined the foundation for all of our work: few words, while constantly striving to strike the right emotional tone for each and every scene. I tried to always start from her extraordinary acting instinct

and nudge her towards more vulnerability.

For the role of Milos et Salomé, I needed to meet people whose input would help me further define the characters while I was searching for the right person. Alexis Manenti was different from the character as I'd initially envisioned him but suddenly he brought him to life in a very surprising manner, with gentleness and restraint, far from the roles in which I'd seen him before. Nina Meurisse also made her character shift from its written version. She made her livelier and more spontaneous, making her the perfect counterpoint to Hafsia's character in her way of acting, her language, the energy emanating from her. It was very important for me to have these two friends be very

different while being extremely close and having a strong bond.

How did you come up with the idea of the voice over that stays throughout the film?

I wanted the voice over to follow my thought process as a film maker, meaning me pondering over Lydia. A narrative that asks questions without necessarily giving the answers. I had the choice between the best friend and the lover. There is often, in news items of this kind, men that have been duped, and about whom we wonder how could it be possible that they hadn't seen anything, and also wonder about the things they chose not to see. I thought it was interesting that Milos, who could be perceived as a



victim, would wonder about his role as an unwitting accomplice in the story.

Alexandre de La Baume's music practically works as a second voice over, instilling a particular mood in the scenes. How did you work together?

Our reflection on the score started early on, at the writing stage, and then Alexandre composed with the rushes while we were making the film. That is probably the reason why it plays such a significant narrative role. Allowing ourselves to put music to documentary images was a quite gamble as well, bringing reality back into the realm of fiction in these moments.

Which books were important to you when writing the script?

The Rapture of Lol V. Stein, by Marguerite Duras, inspired me for the title and influenced me a great deal. The ball scene, where the heroine sees her fiancé fall madly in love with another woman before her very eyes had left a strong impression on me as a teenager. I love how she recounts the character's initial trauma in an understated, dissociated manner – the denial of sorrow that inhabits the character throughout the book and which she needs to revisit. It spoke to me on the most intimate level, and shed some light on the perspective we sometimes have with respect to difficult events in our lives. This way of grasping how traumatic things reemerge slowly, in

the most unexpected and untimely manner. I gave this idea as the starting point for Lydia's journey: she experiences a brutal love breakup at the beginning of the film but never talks about it. This silence inhabits the character and drives her actions.

Did you have specific film references concerning the staging?

Many films inspired me for the film's formal expression. I really wanted to portray these urban solitudes, film characters who are alone and lonely in the city among the crowds, and in this respect I thought a great deal about *Taxi Driver* or *The Panic in Needle Park*, which were also references when it came to making a connection between great creative license and a

profound rooting in reality. I also thought about Taiwanese and Chinese films from the 2000s, Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Millennium Mambo* or Edward Yang's *Yi Yi*, where the city is very present. I was equally inspired, though more broadly, by Kelly Reichardt's and Lucrecia Martel's films; I've seen every single film made by these directors who have instilled new life in female characters and in contemporary cinema. And of course, there's Alfred Hitchcock's entire body of work, which accompanied my adolescence.



A B O U T T H E D I R E C T O R

Iris Kaltenbäck grew up in France, with a French mother, an Austrian father and an American stepbrother. After studying law and philosophy, she joined the Fémis school in Paris, specifically the screenwriting department. In 2013, she worked as assistant to stage director Declan Donnellan at the Théâtre des Gémeaux in Paris. In 2015, she directed her first short film, *A visit from the Stork*, which received an award at the Brussels International Film Festival. She received the Sopadin Junior Award for her screenplay entitled *Still Shot*. *The Rapture* is her first feature film.

C A S T

Lydia
Milos
Salomé
Jonathan

Hafsia HERZI
Alexis MANENTI
Nina MEURISSE
Younès BOUCIF

C R E W

Director and Screenwriter
Director of Photography
Editors
Sound
1st Assistant Director
Production Designer
Costumes
Production Manager
Sound Design
Mixing
Music
Producers

Produced by
In Co-Production with
With the Participation of
With the support of
In association with
Developed with the support of
International Sales
French Distributor

Iris KALTENBÄCK
Marine ATLAN
Suzana PEDRO and Pierre DESCHAMPS
Guilhem DOMERCQ
Vincent PRADES and Joanne DELACHAIR
Anna LE MOUËL
Caroline SPIETH
Salomé FLEISCHMANN
Guilhem DOMERCQ / Antoine BAILLY
Simon APOSTOLOU
Alexandre DE LA BAUME
Alice BLOCH
Thierry DE CLERMONT-TONNERRE
MACT Productions, Marianne Productions
Arte France Cinéma, JPG Films, BNP Paribas Pictures
Canal+, Ciné+, Arte France
La Région Ile-de-France, La Région Normandie
Cineventure 8, Diaphana Distribution, Be for films
Procirep and L'Angoa
Be For Films
Diaphana

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Sound Format	5.1
Aspect Ratio	1.85
Running time	97'
Genre	Drama
Original version	French
Year of production	2023



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