FRANÇOIS SAGAT CHIARA MASTROIANNI
MAN AT BATH
A FILM BY CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ  ( HOMME AU BAIN )
STORY OF THE FILM

Between the Paris suburbs and New York, Omar and Emmanuel do everything they can to prove to each other that they are no longer in love.

STORY OF THE SHOOT

Certain films happen unexpectedly. That doesn’t mean that there is any less desire behind them; just that their production is organized at a pace and in ways that are unforeseen, given that the film emerges there where you only thought of “trying something”. That was the case for this film. It was a strange and joyful experience to find oneself directing a film that is at once intimate and, I hope, accessible to everyone. The skills I acquired with the films I’ve shot before certainly allowed me to have this relaxed freedom, meaning I could write freely. Like all filmmakers, I know only too well the endless difficulties in putting together a feature-length film, which meant I could revel in the insolent way this one came together.

As someone from Brittany, I’ve always struggled to think of the Parisian suburbs as anything other than a province where Paris is accessible yet untouchable. I come from a province where Paris is a far-off place that one fantasizes about and dreams of. I had this somewhat facile idea that a province so close to Paris – at arms length, but nonetheless ignored – does not result in dreams, but in frustration; a logic based on humiliation and defeat. One which conjures vengeance rather than desire. I wanted to seize on an invitation from Pascal Rambert to shoot at Gennevilliers to overcome my preconceived ideas about a suburb that must surely be envious. And in choosing the neighborhood considered one of the hottest in town (Le Luth, where the municipality, for this very reason, chose not to grant us permission to film), I wanted to treat the word “hot” more in an erotic sense than violent, which it can mean in French. I imagined a utopian setting there, where desires are expressed without fear.

I had no images of Gennevilliers, apart from that of the theatre and its impressive hall and the containers on the port where I illegally photographed a friend shortly after arriving in Paris. But the name Gennevilliers inevitably evokes the name of the artist Gustave Caillebotte, who lived there for many years. Then this painting comes to mind, Homme au Bain (Man at Bath). In it, we see a man from behind drying himself with a gray towel in a white room by a zinc bathtub. He has just climbed out if the bath. His wet feet leave traces on the floor. This was quite a bold painting at the end of the 19th century; this virile figure, caught in an interior situation, usually an ideal backdrop for feminine eroticism. The male nude in painting was mainly reserved for heroes or gods. But just a nude man, observed with tenderness, a man caught in an intimate moment, vulnerable and touching; at the time, this was genuine transgression. In my films, I have given an increasing amount of space to language. This time, I wanted above all to film bodies. The sculpted, mistreated, exaggerated body of Emmanuel’s character. And the easy-going, pleasurable, mixed-race bodies of his successive lovers.

That is how I defined my subject: Building a narrative at the start of the 21st century in response to this Man in the Bathroom from the end of the 19th. A narrative of virility without the initiation to Virility with a capital V: An everyday, domestic virility that is rarely seen.

But happily, films are not subjects, and they change according to the circumstances of their production. So, when I had begun scouting for locations in Gennevilliers, I had the opportunity to leave for New York with Chiara Mastroianni. I took a little DV camera with me, and since I was impatient to shoot this fiction in Gennevilliers, I began to make a more personal, more sentimental echo of it. Like pre-shoot notebook, I invented sequences according to our encounters in the Big City. And gradually, I fashioned the screenplay of the Gennevilliers narrative from this counterpoint of New York that I was experiencing. The project of Man at Bath became more complex with the unexpected wish to integrate this filmed diary in the fictional material of the film, as well as the inclusion in the project of an actress through a documentary element.

In the end, there are two towns; Gennevilliers and New York: Two characters; François Sagat and Chiara Mastroianni: Two forms; drama and documentary.

CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ
"The (beautiful) women alongside me in this film (Kate, Chiara) were almost enough to make
me forget the presence of all those insolent and predatory little faggots, with their hairless
adolescent bodies. I suddenly felt quite old. It was a challenge playing the role of
Emmanuel, one which was genuinely pieced together, and therefore difficult to act because
I've never fallen in love with a boy in my life. Here, I'm constantly surrounded, accompanied,
followed, pursued, observed; I am exploited, desired, manipulated, toyed with, borrowed,
in love, but terribly ALONE."

FRANÇOIS SAGAT

"I admit that for Man at Bath, I somewhat forced my way in. I didn't even know if there was
going to be a girl in it, I'd only heard them talk about boys, I just went for it!
There was no script, I didn't always know when Christophe was filming, nor what he was
filming. It made things very unreal, especially because we were shooting partly in New York,
and I loved shooting like that. It wasn't the least bit stressful; on the contrary. And it was
possible because Christophe knows that I know that he knows exactly what he wants. In
other words, we trust each other. I haven't seen the film yet; I can't wait."

CHIARA MASTROIANNI

"I never thought I'd find myself one day in front of a camera. I didn't want to be in front of
the camera one day. The journey is short. I arrived in New York on a Tuesday, I left on a
Sunday. I didn't know anything. I didn't get any answers in the end. I just had faith.
Throughout the stay, strangers intimidated me. I thought again about the balcony, the hotel
room, about Making Plans for Lena. I thought again about Christophe, about Chiara. I tried
to imagine what the film would be like. I don't know.

DUSTIN SEGURA-SUAREZ

"Gennevilliers (outside Paris), early spring, a few days during which I met and then left my
lover in the film. It was he that left me, but it's me that goes away. Well no, I ask him to go
and he disappears."

OMAR BEN SELLEM

"My moment with the boys. APRIL 2010, I am in Hamlet by Koltes, in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.
Christophe asks me to be in the film. I want to do it. He says, we will find a solution. We do.
Sunday: Hamlet finishes at 7pm, my bag is packed, I leave for the airport from the back of
the dressing room. 9pm: Atlanta to Paris.
Monday: CDG, 11am. Shower, change, 3pm: on set. 5pm: Shooting begins.
Monday to Tuesday 4am: Francois’ soft voice, speaking endlessly on a cab ride from
Gennevilliers to Boulevard Magenta, stressing about singing, Francois’ very cute ass,
Sebastien (my Cat Stevens) saving my “musical” ass, Marlboro Reds, three in the bed.
Wednesday: 10am, Paris to Atlanta. 6pm: On stage for Hamlet.
Thursday morning: The volcano stops all air traffic in Europe."

KATE MORAN

"The only experience in front of a camera that I’d ever had before was about 10 years ago
when I was fooling around with my sister taking my father’s camera and replaying scenes
from films that we knew by heart. The musical sequence in Girls was the one I liked most,
it was the scene I most wanted to act out. With a spanking from François! That left a big
impression on me."

RABAH ZAHI

"I had never acted or even considered acting until Christophe invited me to be in his film.
As I’ve been a great admirer of his films for a long time, I was excited and honored to think
that having a role in this film would allow me to intersect his work in even a small way. He
described the character he wanted me to play and something of the character’s circums-
tances, and he asked me to improvise some dialogue. I wrote a possible text to use, and I
spoke/remembered it as well as I could during the filming, while also devising some
spontaneous dialogue with Francois Sagat. The experience was fantastically interesting.
Christophe, the actors, and the members of the crew made what I expected to be a very
nerve-wracking situation feel strangely comfortable. I’m hugely grateful to have had the
opportunity, and I hope that what I managed to do is in service to Christophe’s work."

DENNIS COOPER
CHIARA MASTROIANNI
ACTRESS

2011
POULET AUX PRUNES by M SATRAP AND V PARONNAUD

2010
MAN AT BATH by Christophe HONORÉ

2009
MAKING PLANS FOR LENA by Christophe HONORÉ
nomination for best actress - Globes de Cristal 2009

2008
PARDON MY FRENCH by Sophie FILLIÈRES
CRIME IS OUR BUSINESS by Pascal THOMAS

2007
PARK BENCHES by Bruno PODALYDÈS
A CHRISTMAS TALE by Arnaud DESPLECHIN
Official Selection – Festival of Cannes 2008

2006
TOWARDS ZERO by Pascal THOMAS

2004
AKOIBON by Edouard BAER
IL EST PLUS FACILE POUR UN CHAMEAU... by Valeria BRUNI-TEDESCHI

2003
CARNAGES by Delphine GLEIZE
Un Certain Regard section - Festival de Cannes 2002

2001
ZENO - LE PAROLE DI MOI PADRE by Francesca COMENCINI
Un Certain Regard section - Festival de Cannes 2001

1999
LA FAUTE AU VENT by Emmanuelle BERCOT

CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ
DIRECTOR

2010
MAN AT BATH (Homme au Bain)

2008
MAKING PLANS FOR LENA (Non ma fille tu n’iras pas danser)

2007
THE BEAUTIFUL PERSON (La Belle Personne)

2006
HÔTEL KUNTZ short film

2005
LOVE SONGS (Les Chansons d’amour)
Official selection – Festival de Cannes 2007

2004
SEVENTEEN TIMES CECILE CASSARD (17 fois Cécile Cassard)
Official selection – Festival de Cannes 1996

1998
BRACCIA DI BURRO by Sergio CASTELLITTO
LA LETTRE by Manoel de OLIVEIRA
Jury Prize – Festival de Cannes 1999

1997
À VENDRE by Laetitia MAISON

1996
CAMELEONE by Benoît COHEN

1994
N’OUBLIE PAS QUE TU VAS Mourir by Xavier BEAUVOIS
Jean Vigo Prize 1995

1993
LA BELLE ÉTOILE by Antoine DESROSIERES

1992
MY FAVORITE SEASON by André TECHINÉ
Nomination for best female newcomer – César 1994

CAST
FRANÇOIS SAGAT
EMMANUELLE BERCOT

CHIARA MASTROIANNI
DUSTIN SEGURA-SUAREZ
OMAR BEN SELLEM
RASAH ZAIH
KATE MORAN
KATE’S FIANCE

FRANÇOIS SAGAT
CHIARA MASTROIANNI
DUSTIN SEGURA-SUAREZ
OMAR BEN SELLEM
RASAH ZAIH
KATE

KATE’S FIANCE

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