MK2 presents

Juliette BINOCHÉ
Charles BERLING
Jérémie RENIER

Summer Hours
A film by
Olivier ASSAYAS

MX2
MK2 presents

a film by

Olivier Assayas

Starring

Juliette Binoche    Charles Berling    Jérémie Renier

I wanted, as simply as possibly, to tell the story of a life-cycle that resembles that of the seasons…

Olivier Assayas

France, 35mm, color, 2008. Running time : 102'

in coproduction with France 3 Cinéma

and the participation of the Musée d’Orsay

and of Canal+ and TPS Star

with the support of the Region of Ile-de-France

in partnership with the CNC

INTERNATIONAL SALES

MK2
55 rue Traversière - 75012 Paris
tel : + 33 1 44 67 30 55 / fax : + 33 1 43 07 29 63
intlsales@mk2.com

PRESS

MK2 - 55 rue Traversière - 75012 Paris
tel : + 33 1 44 67 30 11 / fax : + 33 1 43 07 29 63
The divergent paths of three forty something siblings collide when their mother, heiress to her uncle’s exceptional 19th century art collection, dies suddenly. Left to come to terms with themselves and their differences, Adrienne (Juliette Binoche) a successful New York designer, Frédéric (Charles Berling) an economist and university professor in Paris, and Jérémie (Jérémie Renier) a dynamic businessman in China, confront the end of childhood, their shared memories, background and unique vision of the future.
The script of your film was inspired by an initiative from the Musée d’Orsay. Was this a constraint during the writing process?

Not at all. In the beginning, there was the desire of the Musée d’Orsay to associate cinema with the celebrations of its twentieth birthday by offering carte blanche to four directors from very different backgrounds. These four short films were intended to be brought together in one film. For technical reasons, the project had to be abandoned. What remained was the initial spark that inspired my friend Hou Hsiao Hsien and me: the characters, a framework that was too big for a short film from the outset and which, once the film moved away from its initial context, became completely autonomous.

For me, the relationship between the work and the museum and between the museum-goer and the displayed objects was the oldest geological strata. This determined my personal exploration of a universal theme. Many other layers were applied later, following the same process of creation as every one of my films.

Your family drama has a Chekhovian feel. Are you a "literary" director?

I have always been interested in the structure of the novel. But "literary" often refers to the 19th century, to the classical novel, whereas I’ve also been affected by contemporary literature. My relation to film writing is more literary than "scenaristic." And from this perspective, I have no problem with being literary. I really admire Chekhov. I’m tempted to say: like everybody else. When we were shooting, I’d sometimes say jokingly to the actors that our film was a "scenaristic." And from this perspective, I have no problem with being literary. I really admire Chekhov. I’m tempted to say: like everybody else. When we were shooting, I’d sometimes say jokingly to the actors that our film was a "scenaristic." And from this perspective, I have no problem with being literary. I really admire Chekhov.

You have again brought three generations together on screen, after your family saga «The Cherry Orchard», what interests you in this motif of the family?

Everyone has his own relationship with family and in one way or another, knows its internal dynamics. As a result, it can easily be transposed to another context and remain real. Even if my relations with my family aren’t those of the film, there are inevitable autobiographical echoes. The reaction it triggered in each actor is another case in point. There’s the film I wrote and the film we made. I let the actors invent their characters, comprised of their own experiences. When we’re dealing with a simple, universal subject, everyone has something authentic to contribute. Furthermore, I feel that I’d never really made a film about family before «Summer Hours». «Les destinées» was a period film adapted from a book by Jacques Chardonne. It is more his world than mine, more his era than ours. With «Summer Hours», I was able to speak about the relations between brothers and sisters, in the present.

«Summer Hours» is situated in a less "globalist" vein than your recent films. Why return to a more intimate story at this particular moment in your career?

This film comes after a trilogy which hadn’t been conceived as such, structured around the notion of internationalized society. With «Demonlover», «Clean» and «Boarding Gate» I wanted to tell stories about the world today, where cultures and languages mix, where the movement of people is determined – as it has always been - by the movement of merchandise and money. I had no idea this would distance me so much from my original thematic and the established values of French cinema. I’ve wanted to come back home for a while, even if I may leave again afterwards. This is why I immediately accepted the Musée d’Orsay project. It was an opportunity to bring me back to the subject of my past, my history and my roots. I wrote it at a time when I realized that my mother would not live forever. She died last year. So I was forced to rethink the film, which had taken on overwhelming significance for me.

At the same time, globalization is there, in Jérémie and Adrienne’s professions that take them abroad...

Certainly. Yet I see a difference between the career of an artist like Adrienne (Juliette Binoche), who no longer thinks about geographical borders, and that of her brother Jérémie (Jérémie Renier) who is part of a movement, part of the history of modern economy - the very economy that Frédéric (Charles Berling) does not believe in. In Europe, there is a lot of abdication among technical/sales executives who identify with Anglo-Saxon free-market culture and its values, learned interchangeably in French or American business schools. These modern executives, the lower to middle ranks of today’s bourgeoisie, are often the most active players in society. They scorn their own history and, deep down, their own identity. I’m very skeptical about this development, which seems wrong to me. I wanted to tell the story of a family that has roots in the past but with ramifications in the present. What happens when one generation takes over from another? Globalization is as much a human as economic phenomenon, which implicates transformations in the social existence of individuals. In most branches of contemporary industry, an executive will have to deal with the issue of being relocated, to wherever his profession has been displaced, according to the new circulation of knowledge and skills. This has consequences in terms of transmission, history and identity.

Ancient or traditional forms of the family are transfiguring. It is no longer a question of fighting to possess family heritage, but rather knowing how to get rid of it. How does this past, which no longer represents much, all of a sudden jump on us from behind? What do we do with it? What interests me in the movie in not so much the material value of things, but their symbolic value.

Is the family home, in its permanence, one of the film’s characters?

I know it’s not very original, but I’m convinced that places have souls. The house materializes the link between the characters and, in a way, what gets lost among them is this link. Generation after generation, something has been left in this house, layer by layer, stratus by stratus. When it’s gone, everything that united the characters comes undone, disappears, becomes a void. The house is at the heart of the film, as a material place and one invested in the flux of identity.

This is your third film with Charles Berling. What do you appreciate most about him?

The human relation is what is most precious to me with actors. I’d say the same about everyone who worked on the film. That’s where all exchange begins.
It is important for me that the actors absorb what the character and story are telling, above all by appropriating it, making it resound with their own individual sensibility. I have wanted to work with Charles Berling at different moments in my career. He has a rather unique capacity for transforming himself, exploring in cinema and theater the multiple facets of his personality: it is also, I think, in this manner that I approach film writing.

We get the impression that he is sort of your alter ego in this film...

I'm forced to confront this question after three films together! Of course, in «Summer Hours» addresses this. My protagonists are no longer happy to just be in the present or to inventory the past. They ask themselves a new question: what they will leave behind? This time it was very clear to me that I wanted to return to a certain lightness, a spontaneity, and ease that I felt while making «Late August, Early September» which was a happy time for me, possibly because I felt it was vulnerable and perishable. I knew that afterwards I had to make «Les destinées» a heavy and complicated production. It was like setting out to climb Mount Everest. Since then I’ve regretted what I left behind and I’ve wanted to come back to it. «Summer Hours» gave me this opportunity.

You are very attentive to the texture of your images. How did you work with Eric Gautier, your cinematographer?

Eric Gautier and I said early on that we would accentuate the movements of death and resurrection in the film. But Eric Gautier and I espouses the rhythms and tonalities of the seasons. How did you achieve this?

Cinematographically, each chapter of the film imposed its own style. When we’re with Hélène (Edith Scob), things are grounded. In the first part, I tried, so far as possible, to capture the family interacting together, swathed in light, with all the generations together. Afterwards, each person cuts himself off. There is no more of that life centered on a family. Children and nature are gone. We’re with the adults. We’ve left a sensual world for one that grows harder and darker. When the teenagers come to the fore, seasons have passed. It is springtime again. I adapt to their rhythm, using long shots with a hand-held camera that were absent from the rest of the film. We follow their movement, their running about, their joy. The group and the house blend together in a pure choreography that takes its time.

The objects of the family legacy are charged with emotion. They have a friendly presence in the house. But they become static, exposed to everyone in the museum, almost captives.

I wanted to talk about how art is born from life and gets embalmed in museums. I like museums but the pieces in them are in a zoo. When they are made, they live, breathe and exist with the world. The museum takes their light away. Using the Decorative Arts allowed me to highlight this. A chair or an armoire are made to participate in the lives of human beings. On display, they lose their meaning and their truth. I experienced first-hand the anecdote Frédéric tells of his visit to a private collection with a painter. I was with Francesco Clemente, one of the great contemporary artists, whom I admire very much. The artworks were held in a sort of sinister vault-apartment in Switzerland. He was horrified to find one of his own works there. Today painting has lost a lot of its soul in a frenzied relation to money.

Isn’t it a metaphor for France, which can be seen like a museum?

There’s something stiff about Europe, something fixed, its reluctance to participate in the movement of the world. Nevertheless, the French are interested in the world - they take part of it, they travel. But there is a structure - the country, identity, - the beams of which creak when it has to fit itself into the flow of today’s world. Are we sure that these flows are desirable? Wouldn’t we rather hold onto what we’ve acquired over time? This is the current social debate in France and it is right to be having it. What are the roles to be played by history, what’s being lived, and the transformation of the world? In Asia, in Latin America, and partially still in the United States. We can see where history is being made. In France the question is not «are we making history?» but «what do we do with the history of others?»

You are very attentive to the texture of your images. How did you work with Eric Gautier, your cinematographer?

Eric Gautier and I said early on that we would accentuate the movements of death and resurrection in the film. But I didn’t want to use painting or photography as a starting point. He knows my passion for Bonnard... We have spoken about him a thousand times. So instead I pointed him toward the poetic heart of the matter. I got him to listen to music: english hippy folk music from the sixties and seventies. I wanted a note that would evoke space, nature, melancholy, the passage of time and the seasons. In the end, there is very little music in the film but it has never been so easy for me to place it because it’s the music, as it is often the case, that inspired me. I knew in advance that...
it would blend seamlessly into the film. I looked among the compositions of Robin Williamson and the Incredible String Band, a hippy group that was scorned for a while but which is being rediscovered today. Its blend of Celtic and Oriental tonalities evokes a childlike sense of wonder.

Again, you combine opposites in this film. Your realist approach, anchored in the here and now, encounters your stylization. In this way you are similar to the Asian directors you admire. Do you claim these influences as your own?

I want to answer very simply that «Summer Hours» is my most Taiwanese film! It’s my own personal schizophrenia, but I’ve always felt like a sort of Taiwanese director working in France. When I started making movies, the preoccupations of Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Edward Yang affected me, resonated with my own. Later I became interested in the work of Wong Kar Wai and Tsai Ming-Liang. They are more my family than French cinema of the time, that of directors starting back then, with whom I had little in common in the generational sense. Their preoccupations were not mine. We had followed different paths. As strange as it may seem, with my Chinese friends I felt I could have, symbolically, the dialogue I had been deprived of here. With «Summer Hours» I return to very local material where there is a relationship to nature, time and modernity, the themes I share with Hou Hsiao-Hsien.


**Juliette Binoche On Her Character**

Adrienne is a rebel. She wanted to shake off the past, reinvent herself and get out from under the weight of her family. That’s why she went far away, to the other side of the Atlantic. The distance allowed her to refashion herself. She is full of contradictions... Despite her inner turbulence, Adrienne is close to her mother and connected with her brothers but this closeness is why she needs to affirm her difference. The fact that she accomplishes herself more in her work than in her life is part of what sets her apart. It reveals her need to break away.

When I read the script, I liked the idea of exploring family relationships and looking at the question of heritage. What do we inherit? What do we cling to in this final separation? What matters to us: the character we inherit, material things, places we grew up in, family relationships? In the end I had the impression that Adrienne inherits the family’s creative heritage (she is a well-known designer). At the same time, her mother’s death leaves her in an abyss that isolates her from her brothers.

**Charles Berling On His Character**

When I first read the script I was working on «Caligula» for the theater and I was immediately moved: the relationship to heritage, to culture, to barbarism, these people who brush away an entire cultural and artistic history. It is a film about memory, the place of memory from one generation to the next, what we leave to others and the state of France today.

I’m very responsive to paintings and objects, to art. I’ve often discussed this with my son, because for his generation, it seems logical to sweep away a certain amount of values, to reject them or to rebel against them. Then, Olivier wanted Émile, my son, to play the role of my son in the movie. There was an interesting mirror effect.

**Jeremie Renier On His Character**

My character is the youngest in the family and in a way, he wants to prove he is an adult. He manages a company and has a family. He has responsibilities.

As an actor, I am drawn to playing different characters and transforming myself. I try to see how the character could develop. That’s how I see the job of acting: as research that also requires putting yourself at risk. Olivier Assayas’ film resonated in me. I looked at the question of transmission in a documentary I made about my grandfather. He has died since then. I also wanted to explore an inter-generational theme. «Summer Hours» is the story of a life with universal implications.

There was a real alchemy in the group while we were shooting. Olivier Assayas is a director who pays special attention to actors. The place actors occupy is what’s most important to him. He puts them first, which makes it a pleasure to work with him. He leaves us the freedom to express ourselves and make suggestions. He is always on the lookout and he lets his actors bounce off each other.
OLIVIER ASSAYAS

SCRIPTWRITER AND DIRECTOR

2008
L’HEURE D’ÉTÉ (Summer Hours) with Juliette Binoche, Charles Berling, Jérôme Renier
ELDORADO (music documentary) with Angelin Preljocaj, Karlheinz Stockhausen

2007
BOARDING GATE with Asia Argento, Michael MadSEN, Kelly Lin, Carl Loong Ng
Cannes Festival, Out of Competition

2005
NOISE (music documentary) with Sonic Youth, Jeanne Balibar, Metric

2004
CLEAN with Maggie Cheung, Jeanne Balibar, Béatrice Dalle
Cannes Festival, in Competition, Maggie Cheung, Best actress

2002
DEMONLOVER with Connie Nielsen, Chloé Sevigny, Charles Berling
Cannes Festival, in Competition

2000
LES DESTINEES SENTIMENTALES (Les destinées) with Charles Berling, Emmanuelle Béart
Cannes Festival, in Competition

1998
FIN AOUT, DEBUT SEPTEMBRE (Late August, Early September) with Mathieu Amalric, Virginie Ledoyen, Jeanne Balibar
San Sebastian Festival, in Competition, Jeanne Balibar, Best actress

1997
IBMA VEP with Maggie Cheung, Bulle Ogier, Jean-Pierre Léaud
Cannes Festival, Official Selection, Un Certain Regard

1994
L’EAU FROIDE (Cold Water) with Virginie Ledoyen, Cyprien Fouquet, László Szabó
Cannes Festival, Official Selection, Un Certain Regard

1993
UNE NOUVELLE VIE (A New Life) with Sophie Aubry, Judith Godrèche, Bernard Giraudieu

1991
PARIS S’ÉVEILLE (Paris Awakens) with Judith Godrèche, Thomas Langmann, Jean-Pierre Léaud
Jean-Vigo Prize

1989
L’ENFANT DE L’HIVER (Winter’s Child) with Clotilde de Bayser, Michel Felber, Marie Mathon

1986
DISORDER (Disorder) with Waduk Stanczak, Ann-Gisel Glass, Lucas Belvaux
International Critics’ Prize, Venice

BOOKS

HONG KONG CINEMA (in collaboration with Charles Tesson) Edited by l’Étoile, 1984
CONVERSATION WITH BERGMAN (in collaboration with Stig Eliorkman) Edited by l’Étoile, 1990
ELOGE DE KENNETH ANGER Edited by l’Étoile, 1999
UNE ADOLESCENCE DANS L’APRES-MAI Edited by Cahiers du cinéma, 2005
CREW

Written and directed by Olivier Assayas

Produced by Marin Karmitz, Nathanaël Karmitz, Charles Gillibert

Cinematography Eric Gautier A.F.C.

Editing Luc Barnier

Sound Nicolas Cantin, Olivier Goinard

Sets François-Renaud Labarthe

Costumes Anais Romand, Jürgen Döring

Production Director Sylvie Barthet

Assistant Director Matthew Gledhill

Script Clémentine Schaeffer

Casting Antoinette Boulat

CAST

Juliette Binoche Adrienne

Charles Berling Frédéric

Jérémy Renier Jérémy

Edith Scob Hélène

Dominique Reymond Lisa

Valérie Bonneton Angela

Isabelle Sadoyan Eloïse

Kyle Eastwood James

Alice de Lencquesaing Sylvie

Emile Berling Pierre

Jean-Baptiste Malartre Michel Waldemar

Gilles Arbona Maître Lambert

Eric Elmosnino Commissaire de police

François-Marie Banier Président de la Commission des Dations
Paul Berthier does not exist, but if he had, he would have been the modern painter of the transparent clarity of Île de France, its gardens and its undergrowth, where I grew up. He would have been the painter of that light, that nature, and of the changing seasons. I was inspired by his imaginary oeuvre.

Olivier Assayas
THE ART IN THE FILM

Smoked glass vase with colored claw feet (1879)
Oblong vase in white glass with five green bubbles (1879)
Félix Bracquemond - Lent by Mrs. Jundt

Orchid desk (1905)
Large half-moon window display case in mahogany and gilded bronze (1905)
Louis Majorelle - Lent by the Musée d'Orsay

Armoire with three panels (1904)
Josef Hoffmann - Lent by Galerie Historismus

Chemin de Sèvres, view overlooking Paris (1855)
Brittany Landscape, a fence in the shade of large trees (1845)
Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot - Musée du Louvre

Domecy Decoration (1900 - 1901)
Odilon Redon - Musée d'Orsay

«Dancer looking at the sole of her right foot»
Edgar Degas - Original in Musée d'Orsay

Pair of billet vases «Atelier d'Auteuil» (1872 - 1881)
Lent by Mr. Laurens d'Albis
INTERNATIONAL SALES

Mathilde HENROT
(Director of Sales)
mathilde.henrot@mk2.com

Matthieu GIBLIN
(Int’l Sales Executive)
matthieu.giblin@mk2.com

Juliette SCHRAEMECK
(Int’l Sales Executive)
juliette.schrameck@mk2.com

Dorothée PFISTNER
(Sales & Marketing Executive)
dorothee.pfistner@mk2.com

Birgit KEMNER
(Marketing & Festival Manager)
birgit.kemner@mk2.com