

BERGAMO FILM MEETING

International Film Festival

41st edition, March 11 - 19, 2023



Ursula Meier (France - Switzerland) and Jaco Van Dormael (Belgium) are the protagonists of Europe, Now!, the Bergamo Film Meeting section dedicated to contemporary European cinema.

PRESS KIT AND IMAGES

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Bergamo Film Meeting reconnaissance of contemporary European cinema on its 41st edition will focus on the works of **Ursula Meier (France - Switzerland)** - which straddle the thin borderline between fiction and documentary - masterfully analyse the profound ambivalence of emotional ties, and **Jaco Van Dormael (Belgium)**, who relies on his experimental, non-linear, dreamlike and visionary narrative style to explore childhood, dwelling with great sensitivity on the depiction of the complexity of life. The **complete works** of both filmmakers will be presented for **the first time in Italy**.

The section will also be complemented by a **selection of graduation films** from the **European film schools** participating in the **CILECT** program, in collaboration with the Civica Scuola di Cinema Luchino Visconti of Milan and by Europe, Now! Film Industry Meetings (March 13 - 14), a two-day panel for film industry professionals established as a platform for networking and keeping up to date with the available opportunities.

Ursula Meier (Besançon, France, 1971)

Ursula Meier is a director and screenwriter. She often navigates the thin borderline between fiction and documentary, analysing with great skill the profound ambivalence of emotional ties. Growing up in eastern France, near the Swiss border, she studied film and television production in Belgium at the IAD - Institut des Arts de Diffusion and began working as an assistant to Alain Tanner in the second half of the 1990s. Her diploma film, *Le Songe d'Isaac*, and the subsequent *Des Heures sans sommeil* (1998), won the special jury prize at the Festival international du court métrage de Clermont-Ferrand and the International Grand Prix at the Toronto Film Festival, and allowed her to devote herself to cinema full time. In 2001, she directed the short film *Tous à table* - about a group of friends who meet at a special birthday dinner - which won the audience award at Clermont-Ferrand.

After two documentaries, *Autour de Pinget* (2000) - a tribute to the work of the writer Robert Pinget - and *Pas les flics, pas les noirs, pas les blancs* (2002) - on the extraordinary story of Alain Devegney, deputy sergeant of the Geneva gendarmerie - she directed *Des épaules solides* (2003), produced for the ARTE series "Masculin-Féminin/Petite Caméra", achieving great success with the public and a nomination for the Swiss Film Prize. The film tells the story of Sabine, a talented young athlete who wants to pursue a professional sports career and pushes her body to extreme limits.

Her first feature film was *Home*, starring Isabelle Huppert, in 2008, in which she recounts the vicissitudes of a family living in a remote cottage near a closed motorway, which, to their surprise and concern, is about to be reopened, with all the unpleasant consequences imaginable. The film was presented during the International Critics' Week at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival and received a nomination for the 2009 César Awards in the Best First Feature category and was nominated for Best Cinematography and Best Production Design. In 2012, with *L'Enfant d'en haut* (*Sister*), the story of siblings Simon and Louise, she received a special mention for the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival and represented Switzerland in the nominations for the 2013 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film; she also received a nomination at the 2013 Lumière Awards for Best Francophone Film and one at the 2013 Independent Spirit Awards for Best Foreign Language Film.

In 2014, she was among the 13 directors who created the collective film *The Bridges of Sarajevo*, shot on the occasion of the WWI 100th anniversary and presented at the Cannes Film Festival; her segment, *Tišina Mujo*, takes place during a football practice in the Zetra stadium, where little Mujo misses a penalty kick by sending the ball over the fence. She then made *Kacey Mottet Klein, Naissance d'un acteur* (2015), a short film which documents the physical and professional growth of the young actor starring in her two previous films, and *Ondes de choc - journal de ma tête* (2018), a feature film with Fanny Ardant, in which a young man kills his parents after sending his secret diary to his French teacher.

La ligne (*The invisible line*, 2022), the story of three sisters, a mother and a forced distance, is Meier's latest work presented in competition at the 2022 Berlin Film Festival starring Valeria Bruni Tedeschi. The film recounts the dynamics of an atypical family, in which it's space that defines affections and relationships.

The director will attend the Festival from March 13 to 15.

With the patronage of Consulate General of Switzerland in Milan. In collaboration with SWISS FILMS.

FILMS INCLUDED IN THE RETROSPECTIVE

La ligne (*The invisible line*, 2022)

Ondes de choc - journal de ma tête (*Shock Waves: Diary Of My Mind*, 2018)

Kacey Mottet Klein, Naissance d'un acteur (*Kacey Mottet Klein, Birth Of An Actor*, short, 2015)

Tišina Mujo (*Quiet Mujo*, short, 2014)

L'Enfant d'en haut (*Sister*, 2012)

Home (2008)

Des épaules solides (*Strong Shoulders*, 2002)

Pas les flics, pas le noirs, pas les blancs (doc, 2002)

Tous à table (*Table Manners*, short, 2001)

Autour de Pinget (*Around Pinget*, doc, 2000)

Des heures sans sommeil (*Sleepless*, short, 1998)

Le songe d'Isaac (short, 1994)

Jaco Van Dormael (Ixelles, Belgium, 1957)

He's a director, screenwriter and producer. Raised between Germany and Belgium, Van Dormael first developed a passion for theatre, which accompanied him throughout his artistic career. At the age of eighteen, he took up clowning and became a director of children's shows. After studying film at Louis-Lumière in Paris and INSAS in Brussels, he wrote and directed his first short documentary and fiction films in the early 1980s. The best known, *È pericoloso sporgersi* (1984), is the story of a child who experiences two possible versions of his future. The short film won the Grand Prix at the Clermont-Ferrand festival, revealing Van Dormael's experimental, non-linear, dreamlike and visionary narrative style, his predilection for childhood characters and themes, and his near-obsession in depicting the complexity of life, caught between choices and destiny, between limitations and possibilities.

Success with audiences and critics came in 1991 with his first feature film, *Toto le héros* (*Toto the hero at the end of the millennium*), in which old Totò is convinced he's been swapped with his neighbour as a baby and is determined to take revenge for having been robbed of his actual life. On its debut at Cannes, the film won the

Caméra d'Or, followed by a César and four European Film Awards. In 1996, he presented *Le Huitième Jour* (*The Eighth Day*), a Palme d'Or at Cannes for the two leads - Daniel Auteuil and Pascal Duquenne - who portray on screen a unique friendship that develops between an ordinary man and a boy with Down Syndrome. At the core of the film is another theme that runs through Van Dormael's filmography, i.e. physical and mental disability, always portrayed respectfully and sympathetically. Several years later, Van Dormael directed *Mr. Nobody* (2009), starring Jared Leto and Sarah Polley and winner of the Best Screenplay award at the Venice Film Festival. Picking up on the subject of the "alternative" lives of *È pericoloso sporgersi* (in fact, all of Van Dormael's films refer to each other), he portrays a hypothetical future where Nemo Nobody, the last of mortals and the world's oldest man, retraces all the possible versions of his past, in a tangle of lives lived or imagined, conditioned by individual choices and chance.

Van Dormael's fourth feature film, *Le tout nouveau testament* (*The Brand New Testament*) came out in 2015. A surreal comedy where a despotic and violent God torments and controls the destinies of humans through an old computer, the film premiered at the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs in Cannes to critical acclaim, was a box-office success and won four Magritte Awards, including Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenplay.

Jaco Van Dormael is not a prolific author, accustomed as he is to developing his scripts over the years, reworking ideas and suggestions collected in notes accumulated day by day. More than a decade has passed between one film and the next, even if interspersed with a few shorts and theatrical plays. From such perspective, *Bovary* (2021), his latest work, represents an anomaly: born from a stage adaptation of Flaubert's novel and written by Michael De Cock, artistic director of the Royal Flemish Theater in Brussels. The original play was to be performed live but was cancelled due to the pandemic. To deliver it to an audience, Van Dormael agreed to shoot in a very short time and bring it to life on the screen: "In five days, I tried to make something that is neither film nor theatre", making extensive use of back projection and extended close-ups or resorting to other cinematic gimmicks. An experiment born out of an emergency situation, which nevertheless allowed Van Dormael to combine, for once, his passion for cinema and the stage.

The director will attend the Festival from March 15 to 18.

With the patronage of Wallonie-Bruxelles International.

The retrospective is organised in collaboration with I Wonder Pictures, which will present a preview in Bergamo of the restored version of Toto le héros (Toto the Héros - A Hero of the End of the Millennium), to be released in Italian cinemas on April 17.

FILMS INCLUDED IN THE RETROSPECTIVE

Bovary (2021)

Le tout nouveau testament (*The Brand New Testament*, 2015)

Mr. Nobody (id., 2009)

Le huitième jour (*The Eighth Day*, 1996)

Lumière et compagni (*Lumière and Company*, VVAA, 1995)

Toto le héros (*Toto le héros - A hero of the end of the millennium*, 1991)

È pericoloso sporgersi (short, 1985)

L'imitateur (short, doc., 1982)

Stade 81 (*Starting Blocks*, short, doc., 1981)

Maedeli la brèche (short, 1980)

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