

Acropolis Cinema presents:



May 21 - 23, 2021 - Lumiere Music Hall

ABOUT THE FILM

Suzanne is 16. She is bored with people of her age. Every day on her way to high school, she passes a theater. There, she meets an older man, and becomes obsessed with him. Despite their age difference, they find in each other an answer to their ennui and fall in love. But Suzanne is afraid she's missing out on life – that life of a 16-year-old, which she had struggled so much to enjoy in the same way as her peers. (KimStim)

73 min. | France | 2020

Interview with Suzanne Lindon by Ella Kemp

The following is an excerpt of an interview originally published by Curzon, April 23, 2021

You're in your early 20s now, and Suzanne the character is 16. When did the idea for this story first begin for you?

I started to write the film when I was 15. At first I had this idea because I wanted to act, but I'm from an [acting] family and I really wanted to feel legitimate to do something like this. The idea I had was to write myself a role, because I wanted to know that I was chosen for the good reasons. So I started to write something that I would like to play, and at the same time I was living this weird period of my teenage years, where I remember feeling happy to be me but also very uncomfortable with myself. I didn't really know who I wanted to become and who I was and what I was dreaming of. I wanted to fall in love, but I wasn't in love, and it was all very complicated. So I mixed everything to get through my desire to act, and the ideas I had about my age during the period I was going through. It was very natural and spontaneous. I remember writing it just as if I was writing a diary. But I knew since the beginning that I wanted this to become a film.

Because the film is clearly so personal, were you worried about where Suzanne the character starts and where you end?

No, because I've always been inspired by my life and by stuff that has happened to me. This is actually the challenge when you write something about yourself – to take things about you but also to transform them to actually write your own movie, because if I wanted to write what really happened to me, it wouldn't be interesting. I wanted to do something fictional and be inspired by myself, by my personality, but also by the ideas I had at this age, to then forget all of that, and just be able to imagine stuff and to build my own story that I wanted to tell. So I wasn't scared, I really needed to feel very free. And I think that by starring in the film, writing the film, directing the film, doing

everything at the same time, it was my way to really express myself – to make my own gesture and to feel totally free.

Your main character has a strong, androgynous sense of style – there's a shot at a party where she's sitting in a white shirt and jeans between two girls wearing floral dresses.

It's weird actually because all the characters in the movie are wearing my clothes. So not only me, but those girls wearing the dresses with flowers on them are wearing my dresses, and even Arnaud is wearing one of my dad's shirts that he gave to me. But it was very important for me to know how my characters will be dressed, this is the first thing you see about people, it's the way they present themselves to the world. And being not too comfortable in feminine things, but also very comfortable in my style, imposing something from the very beginning of the film was a way for me to show that she's actually very proud of what she is. She's not scared. [...] It[']s a way to deliver a message, to show that this young girl has her own personality and that she's not going to try to change to be someone else to fit in a group. This is something that I tried to keep up when I was writing – there's this scene with Raphael who's going to pick her up at her place, and he's telling her, "You can just go on the scooter and we can ride together." And she says no because she doesn't want to go on the scooter [...] to me, this is actually the same thing as the clothes I'm wearing. It was a way for me to assert my personality as my character in the film.

Arnaud Valois, who plays Raphael, is such an amazing actor. What did he bring to the character from his other performances you had seen?

When I was writing the film, I didn't have any idea about who I wanted to play the man of my dreams. And because it was the man of my dreams, I was actually very worried that I wouldn't find him! I was inspired about people I actually knew when writing, but I didn't want them to play in the film, because it would be too real for me. So I remember it was Christmas Day, and I was alone at my place before dinner with my family and I was watching *120 BPM* alone, and I discovered Arnaud. In the film, he's always shy, very silent. He seems to be a very good listener and he's very graceful. And the way he moves and the charisma he's got, I was very interested by that. So I started to imagine if we could work as a couple and whether we could dance together – because the dancing scenes were very important to me. So I asked Arnaud to read the script, and maybe an hour after sending it to him he said he wanted to do it. I thought it was a joke!

You mention the dance scenes – a lot of the film is naturalistic and restrained, and then you have these three moments of movement which really shake things up.

It was a challenge for me, because as you say the film is very realistic. But to me, the dance scenes are also realistic, but also a little dreamy. So I wanted to find this really ambiguous thing between reality and dreams. I didn't want to put the viewer in a place where you can imagine that this never happened. But also, I wanted to imagine that

maybe it is just a dream and it's not happening between them. It was something I needed, because I wanted to talk about this love story in a very pure way. I wanted to depict the innocence and modesty that two people can have when they fall in love and they're too shy to tell each other that they love each other. And when you're 16, sometimes you are more interested in your fantasies than in your real life. It's the case of the character in the film, and also the case of the boyfriend because they are two people who are not the same age, who are not in the same moment of their life, but they are feeling the same. To me, this is what falling in love means. [...] I wanted to show how strong and powerful the love story between them can be, but I didn't want them to kiss, or to make love, because I needed the story to be very pure and platonic.

The dance scenes, and the rest of the film, is set to music that's closer to our parents' age, despite everything else in *Spring Blossom* feeling quite contemporary. Were you deliberately trying to avoid things that might be on the radio today?

I really wanted to avoid everything that could be a time marker, because I wanted the film to be something in which everyone could identify themselves. I wanted it to be timeless. Because I was dealing with a universal topic—falling in love, being an adult, just trying to find yourself at that age—I wanted to use universal things in everything. Universal clothes, universal setups, universal names, and also universal music. Even though it's maybe old fashioned, I think that today people of our age are dressing up vintage, we are listening to old music... I wanted to do something that was actually modern, and I think that modernity today is to accept that we want to do something vintage, that we want to relive something that our parents lived. We are nostalgic about a time that we actually didn't know.

The relationship between Suzanne and Raphael reminded me of Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* (2003) in terms of the boredom the two characters feel in their separate lives and the curiosity they have for one another.

I love Sofia Coppola, she's a genius. She's also from a family of people making movies. She gave me a lot of courage, because my parents are actors, and I was scared to be a daughter of, but when I discovered her movies, I realised that it doesn't matter and that if you have talents you can be yourself and not just be the daughter of someone all your life. I was very shocked by *The Virgin Suicides* (1999) when I was young – it was and still is one of my favourite films. [...] I saw *Lost in Translation* when I was very, very young so I didn't have a lot of memories, but I know that I've been so touched by the two characters and the relationship they have that I never wanted to forget the film. It's always in my mind, but I wasn't even thinking about the film on purpose when I was writing *Spring Blossom*, but I'm sure that because I love it so much it inspired me unconsciously. ♦



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