



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
2025 OFFICIAL SELECTION
COMPETITION

TAHAR RAHIM
GOLSHIFTEH FARAHANI
MELISSA BOROS
A FILM BY
JULIA DUCOURNAU

ALPHA

EMMA MACKEY FINNEGAN OLDFIELD LOUAI EL AMROUSY

MANDARIN FILMS AND KALLOUCHE CINEMA
PRESENT



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A FILM BY JULIA DUCOURNAU

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Synopsis

Alpha, a troubled 13-year-old lives with her single mom. Their world collapses the day she returns from school with a tattoo on her arm.

Interview with Julia Ducournau Director

YOUR LATEST FILM RETURNS TO THE THEME OF A YOUNG GIRL GOING THROUGH A TRANSFORMATION, A THEME THAT WAS ALREADY CENTRAL TO *RAW* AND *TITANE*.

I'm not sure I'd call the character in *Titane* a "young girl," exactly... But yes, they all deal with someone going through a transformation—or, to be more precise, a mutation. I actually prefer the word "mutation" because I focus a lot on my characters' bodies. I study them up close. This makes it sound like it's just a temporary phase the characters go through, whereas in my view, mutation is something that is on-going. It's something that began before the start of the

film and continues on after the film is over.

YOUR LAST TWO FILMS INVOLVED FATHER FIGURES. HERE, THE STORY REVOLVES AROUND A MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP, ONE THAT'S BOTH FOUNDATIONAL AND TRAUMATIC.

First of all, the relationship we have with both our parents are very different. What strikes me, actually, is that I've never been able to explore both parents together. I've never dealt with a two-parent situation in my films. In my first two films, I focused on the father



figure, and especially with Titane, I felt like I'd said what I had to say and fully explored my feelings on that subject. Then there's the mother, and dealing with the mother, with that bond, is incredibly difficult. I've noticed it with other filmmakers, too. Alpha is actually a project I'd been thinking about for years, but I always figured it was something I'd do further down the road. I felt like I wasn't mature enough to take it on yet — that I needed to give it more time to ripen. But circumstances made me feel like I needed to make the film right away. With mothers, you're dealing with a much deeper kind of emancipation. It's about more than just getting out from under a parent's expectations or seeking their approval: it's about breaking free of a symbiotic relationship, a fusion. And it's especially true in this case, when the mother in question is completely self-sacrificing. The "Mom" character isn't just Alpha's mother: she's a Mother with a capital "M". She's a mother to her patients, to her brother, to all of humanity. Her maternal instinct extends to the whole world, and so breaking away from that is incredibly hard.

YOU HAVEN'T ENTIRELY LEFT GENRE CINEMA BEHIND WITH THIS FILM, BUT IT DEFINITELY FEELS LIKE A MOVE AWAY FROM IT.

Actually, I'd almost say the opposite. If I've moved away from anything, it's from the kind of protective distance that genre conventions offer. By "distance," I mean the thing that makes it so that when you watch a horror film, you know it's not real. The monsters or ghosts don't exist: they're just a fictional hypothesis. And by definition, when something's just a hypothesis, it's not threatening. So I've certainly moved away from that. On the flip side, though, I feel like genre and its cathartic potential were assimilated into the film itself. Genre is still there, hidden in the most dramatic,

vulnerable, unspeakable, dangerous parts of the film.

THAT FORCES YOU TO GO MUCH FURTHER IN TERMS OF EMOTIONAL DEPTH THAN IN YOUR PREVIOUS FILMS.

When you're dealing with someone's body, you're dealing with the most intimate part of them. The closer you get to it, the closer you get to vulnerability. And the more you dig into that, the more emotion starts to take over. That's something that I very consciously pursue. Every film I make, I tell myself I can go further — that I can express something even more sincere, something even closer to what I really feel deep down. It pushes me to bring my fears to the screen as precisely as possible. That's exactly what happened after Raw, and again after Titane. Both times, I thought, "I can go further than this. I can expose myself even more." But it takes time, and it will keep taking time in the future.

THE ILLNESS IN THE FILM IS REMINISCENT OF AIDS, BOTH IN TERMS OF THE WAY IT'S TRANSMITTED AND THE STIGMA SURROUNDING IT. WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO INVENT A NEW DISEASE AND SET THE STORY IN AN UNIDENTIFIED TIME AND PLACE?

So that the film would be about a feeling, rather than being strictly about history. I wanted the film to arouse that same feeling of fear so that it would resonate with people today. And that feeling comes, of course, largely from my own memories of what I sensed at the height of the AIDS epidemic, in the '80s and '90s. What really struck me, even more than the idea of the virus itself, was how every strata of society was infected with fear, and how that led to a certain category of people being ostracized —instead of society facing up to the trauma and admitting that it concerned



everyone. The moral reckoning that came out of that was a terrible blow to my generation, in the wake of the sexual liberation of our parents' generation. Incidentally, another key theme in the film is how, in the absence of a grieving process, trauma gets passed down from one generation to the next, whether in a family or a society. At the heart of this idea of transgenerational or familial trauma is the psychological concept of the gisant, or recumbent effigy: the person, or the part of society, that's been struck down by a violent death, a death that society or one's family has attempted to render taboo and deny, or whose impact on younger generations was never fully acknowledged. The word itself comes from those stone statues of saints or kings, lying frozen in marble, that you find in cathedrals. It's a beautiful image, and I wanted to bring it to the screen because it allowed me to elevate the mortality of my characters to the level of the sacred. Though not in a strictly religious sense, I should add.

THERE'S A VERY CLEAR CONTRAST BETWEEN THE WAY THE PAST AND PRESENT ARE PRESENTED VISUALLY IN THE FILM.

I wanted to demonstrate the impact that the illness had on society, and I tried to express that visually. My cinematographer and I worked on giving the past the look of those photos we used to take with disposable Kodak cameras: warm, dense, oversaturated, with something nostalgic about them. And we tried to contrast that with the film's present, where everything is extremely desaturated. The idea was to show how fear transformed things in just a few years, from a unified society to a fragmented, colder, more industrial, nearly metallic one — a society where each character is a prisoner of their own loneliness.

HOW DO YOU APPROACH DIRECTING ACTORS IN SUCH A HIGHLY STYLIZED CINEMATIC UNIVERSE?

By not thinking about style at all! Instead, it's about finding what's most personal about the actors: those places we can all relate to, but that never get talked about. You go and look for that in their bodies, in their beings, in their memories, in their lives, by engaging with them on a deeply personal level. That means opening yourself up and exposing yourself, too, and by sharing that vulnerability as a kind of unspoken pact — a pact that you know is going to help you both transcend that feeling of being vulnerable and transform it into something more.

COULD WE SAY THE ENTIRE FILM IS TOLD FROM ALPHA'S POINT OF VIEW — THAT IT'S SOMEWHERE BETWEEN FANTASY, MEMORY, AND REALITY? WAS THAT ALWAYS YOUR INTENTION?

Yes and no. I knew that the main point of view of the film would be hers: that of a little girl, or a pre-teen girl, with one foot still in childhood. Our instinct is often to protect children by lying to them or trying to shield them from the horrors of the world, but I firmly believe that children understand and are aware of everything. Later on, in the editing process, it became clear to me that even scenes from the mother's life or Amin's life — where Alpha isn't physically present— could still be seen as Alpha's version of them, based on her intuitions or whatever little information was available to her. In the post-production phase, that idea became a more deliberate choice, especially in terms of how we handled the sound. In the tattoo scene at the beginning, where Alpha is basically unconscious, the sound designer and I were imagining that her spirit was leaving her body and drifting through the party, to show that she's capable of a kind of clairvoyance, and to accustom the viewer to the crucial idea that Alpha can see things she shouldn't be able to see.

Cast

Alpha	Mélissa Boros
Mother	Golshifteh Farahani
Amin	Tahar Rahim
Nurse	Emma Mackey
English Teacher	Finnegan Oldfield
Partner English	Frédéric Bayer Azem
Adrien	Louai El Amrousy

Crew

Producers	Mandarin and Compagnie - Eric and Nicolas Altmayer Kallouche cinéma - Jean-Rachid Kallouche and Arnaud Chautard Frakas production - Jean-Yves Roubin and Cassandre Warnauts
Director and Screenwriter	Julia Ducournau
Executive Producer	Aude Cathelin
Line Producer	Julien Flick
First Assistant Director	Barbara Canale
First Assistant Casting Director	Anaïs Duran
Director of Photography	Ruben Impens
Sound Designer	Paul Maernoudt
Gaffer	Nicolas Lagae
Key Grip	Thibault Sellier
Costume Designer	Isabelle Pannetier
Head Makeup Artist	Stéphanie Guillon
Head SFX Makeup Artist	Olivier Afonso
Production Designer	Emmanuelle Duplay
Post-Production Supervisor	Patricia Colombat
A co-production of	Frakas productions, RTBF (Télévision belge), Proximus, Be Tv & Orange, France 3 Cinéma
With the support of	Canal+
With the participation of	Ciné+, OCS , France Télévisions
In association with	Diaphana, Cofinova 22, Indéfilms 14, Cofimahe 36
With the participation of	Filmnation Entertainment, Charades
With the support of	La Région Normandie
With the support of the	et du Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Taxshelter.Be, ING