

UN FILM DE CLAIRE DOYON
PRODUIT PAR TAMARA FILMS

PÉNÉLOPE MON AMOUR



Official Selection

TAMARA FILMS
presents



PENELOPE
MY LOVE

a film by Claire Doyon

90 min
Color

Producer

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SYNOPSIS

For 18 years I have been filming Pénélope, a young adult with autism. One day I opened the cupboard that contained DV tapes and Super 8 reels. My eyes almost popped out. These images had to be brought together.

Penelope My Love traces the journey of a mother and her daughter through the years. It tells of different stages: the shock of the diagnosis, the declaration of war, the abdication of arms, to finally accept and discover a different mode of existence.

This body of Pénélope, and a fortiori this body of the autistic person in social space, what place does it occupy and what place do we give it? What land can cinema invent to design a hospitable space, dream of a world allowing the invisible to become visible?

Pénélope keeps cheering for what she is, I keep questioning who she is. The answer to the question is precisely in this endless quest. Everything is mirrored to me. So, isn't it Pénélope who in turn tells me who I am?

THE IMAGES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CHAMBER

The film's images are a kind of archaeological chamber in which strata of time have settled down: crystals of subjectivity, forgotten testimonies, images of childhood.

Pénélope is four months, five years, seven years, ten years, eighteen years old. The landscapes vary, the faces change, Pénélope grows, my relationship with her evolves. The images reflect the fluctuating moods of these eighteen years. Depending on the era, filming represented different functions. It was initially a control image to show educators what programs to put in place. At the time I was convinced that nothing could stand in the way of my daughter's recovery. I thought it was a matter of will and I was filming with that in mind.

But above all, filming was an act of survival to escape a daily life that passed and overwhelmed me. For example, I staged calling a doctor at the hospital. The wait was long, the intermediaries numerous, the procedures Kafkaesque. 'Playing' in my condition allowed me to take a step back, not to be totally sucked into this daily life.

The formats vary: mini DV, HD, Super 8... The shooting conditions are also very different from one to another. Some are shot with a cinematographer, a sound engineer. Other images are more flickering and fragile.

INTENTION

I started working on this project by meeting adults with autism. Discovering what they are that we are not, special people to be seen in the light of their inner landscape and not of their disability. They would shed light on who Pénélope is, my young adult daughter with autism and muteness. As the meetings and my writing progressed, I realized that the film was about my relationship with Penelope.

Certainly, answers were given to me, and those answers are part of the current film, but none could be regarded as truth. Penelope remains a mystery in her own right. The questions ricocheted and boomeranged back to me. Little by little, the writing of the film shifted towards my way of understanding my relationship with my daughter and her disability; to how my gaze has changed over the years; and to questions that arise from my life with her. Why does autism trigger so much embarrassment and misunderstanding? Why do we “normopaths” seek at all costs to make autistic people look like us? And what paths do we take to reach them? Despite the years, despite the road traveled and the reversals of the signs of affect, all this remains complicated. A small voice in the back of the mind stands alert: what if the miracle happened one day? That shows the persistence of the fantasy of normality. So is *Penelope My Love* just fiction? Parades and imaginary stories? Acting and healing functions of the story?





CLAIRE DOYON

After completing directing studies at the Fémis and Lee Strasberg School, Claire Doyon directed her first feature film *Les Lionceaux* in 2002, selected at La Quinzaine des Réalisateurs at the Cannes Film Festival. She then directed several films: *Le vent souffle où il veut*, *Kataï*, *Les Allées sombres*, *Arsenic*, *Chrishna/Ombwiri*. These films were selected at international festivals such as the Locarno International Film Festival, The Venice Mostra, the Turin Film Festival, the Marseille International Film Festival, the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, Côté Court in Pantin and for which she won prizes. She directed *Pénélope*, a film about a journey with her daughter with autism to the borders of Mongolia, which won the Renaud Victor Prize at the FID in Marseille.

Claire Doyon is the founder of MAIA, an experimental institute created in 2007, located in Paris, currently hosting 24 children and adolescents with autism. This school promotes an experimental pedagogy inspired by various sources and tools. Today Claire Doyon is responsible for innovative projects and initiatives for adults.

FILMOGRAPHY

CHRISHNA/ OMBWIRI (2019) 13 min, documentary, Ecce Films, Côté court Festival, Pantin

ARSENIC (2017) 16 min, short fiction film, cofilms, Festival Côté court, Pantin, Festival Oberhausen

LES ALLÉES SOMBRES (2015) 22 min, fiction, cofilms, FID Marseille, Festival de Pantin, FIAC 2015

PÉNÉLOPE (2012) 45 min, documentary, FID Marseille, Renaud Victor prize, Festival de Turin, Festival de Pantin

SON OF A GUN (2010) 12 min, fiction, co-directed by Antoine Barraut, Festival de Pantin, Turin, Oberhausen, Amsterdam, Art court video Arles, Grauzone, Un festival c'est trop court...

KATAÏ (2009) 30 min, Ecce Films, fiction, 35 mm, Locarno Festival, Clermont Ferrant, Angers, ARTE 2010 broadcast

LES ESPRITS (2006) short films with Joana Preiss, Fabien Almakiewicz, and the group Sister Iodine.

SOLA PERDUTA ABANDONNATA (2008) 7 min, commissioned by the Lucca festival (Italy) as part of the homage to Giacomo Puccini made by the city

LES LIONCEAUX (2002) Feature film, 78 min, Cannes Film Festival Directors' Fortnight, broadcast France 3 (2003)

LE VENT SOUFFLE OÙ IL VEUT (1999) 30 min, Cinéfondation, Cannes 2000 Angers (CCAH prize), Venice (special jury mention), Festival de Femme de Créteil... Broadcast France 3



TAMARA FILMS

Tamara Films is an independent production company created in 2012 by Carole Chassaing. Two partners joined her in 2020, Gérard Lacroix and Anaïs Feuillette.

Since its creation, Tamara Films has been developing documentaries and fiction at the same time. Two modes of production that differ, but are complementary, and in which we engage with the same intensity, driven above all by the strength of the projects. Within Tamara, we have chosen not to increase our productions disproportionately, in order to stay personally as close as possible with each of the films that we support. Tamara Films is a company on a human scale, which engages in projects that carry an aesthetic and values that inspire us.





TECHNICAL SHEET

a film by
Claire Doyon

produced by
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editing
Raphaël Lefèvre

writing consultants
Fred Piet
Carla Bottiglieri

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Claire Doyon
Pascale Granel
(filming in Burgundy)

sound
Claire Doyon
Olivier Schwob
(filming in Burgundy)

1st assistant directors
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Raquel Garcia

manager
Romane Edinger

sound editing
Carole Verner

mixing
Gilles Benardeau

calibration
Graziella Zanoni

1st assistant editor
Andrea Vescan

A production by
Tamara Films
Carole Chassaing
Anais Feuillette
Gérard Lacroix

and

Microclimat
Thomas Carillon
Olivier Mignard

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