

# REEL SUSPECTS

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PRINTER FRIENDLY

## PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST



a.k.a LE DOS ROUGE

A film by

Antoine Barraud

127 min, FRANCE, 2014

Color, HD & DCP

### SYNOPSIS

A re-known filmmaker is working on his next feature. He becomes obsessed with the idea of "monstrosity" as the central imagery around which the film will revolve and develop. He starts visiting museums to find the perfect painting that would illustrate this emotion. For that end, he hires an art historian and finds himself wrecked into the masterpieces of Francis Bacon, Léon Spilliaert, Caravaggio, Théodore Chasseriau, Hans Bellmer and many others. As the "monster" starts to take shape into his mind, a "monstrous" red stain starts growing on his back...

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## CAST

Bertrand : Bertrand Bonello  
Célia Bhy n°1 : Jeanne Balibar  
Célia Bhy n°2 : Géraldine Pailhas  
Barbe : Joana Preiss  
Pascal : Pascal Greggory  
Édith : Sigrid Bouaziz  
Alice : Valérie Dréville  
The Young Journalist : Nicolas Maury  
The Doctor : Barbet Schroeder  
Catherine : Nathalie Boutefeu  
Prométhée : Nâzim Boudjenah  
Renée : Isild Le Besco  
Scottie : Alex Descas  
Edwarda Kane : Marta Hoskins

With the voice of : Charlotte Rampling

## DIRECTORS'S BIOGRAPHY & FILMOGRAPHY

Antoine Barraud directed **Monster**, his first short film, in 2004. **Deluge** followed in 2005 and **Monster, number two** in 2007. All were selected internationally from Angers to Sarajevo, Clermont-Ferrand, Brive, Taipei, Moncton and others. In 2008, **Song** starred Tsai Ming Liang's muse Lu Yi Ching and Japanese director Nobuhiro Suwa (**M/other**). Antoine Barraud moved on to directing several experimental portraits of filmmakers such as Kenneth Anger, Shuji Terayama and Koji Wakamatsu, which were shown at a special screening at the French Cinematheque in February 2010, and later in FID Marseille and the Torino Film Festival. He co-directed **Son of a Gun**, a Super 8 tribute to New York photographer Weegee with Claire Doyon in 2011.

As a producer, he has worked with Tsai Min Liang on **Madam Butterfly** and collaborated with Catherine Libert on the restoration of **Three films by Pierre Clementi**, which opened the Avant Garde section of the New York Film Festival. In 2012, he produced Stephen Dwoskin's last opus, **Age Is ...**, and directed his first feature film, **The Sinkholes**, starring Nathalie Boutefeu and Mathieu Amalric. Both premiered at the Locarno Film Festival. His second feature, **Portrait of the Artist**, starring Bertrand Bonello, Géraldine Pailhas and Jeanne Balibar in the leading roles, will open in 2015. His current projects include two new features - **Monument Valley** (co-directed with Didier D'Abreu) and **Madeleine Collins** - and the production of João Pedro Rodrigues's **The Ornithologist**, and Marie Losier's upcoming extravaganza **Peaches goes Bananas**.

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- 2015 LE DOS ROUGE / PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
- 2012 LES GOUFFRES / THE SINKHOLES
- 2011 SON OF A GUN
- 2010 LA FÔRET DES SONGES
- 2009 RIVER OF ANGER
- 2008 SONG
- 2007 MONSTRE NUMÉRO DEUX
- 2005 DÉLUGE
- 2004 MONSTRE

## DIRECTORS'S STATEMENT

I have always had a deep-felt, mysterious obsession with museums. Their apparent calm and solemnity in displaying what would be classified elsewhere as madness, psychiatry, beat-up lyricism or even absolute violence. Their nature is kind-hearted. I usually say my mother made me love the paintings and my father, an antiques-dealer, the frames around them. I have spent several hours strolling through their long corridors and copying the pictures in my little sketchbooks. Nonetheless, through time, I couldn't avoid becoming a "hasty" visitor, more eager to "see" the paintings than actually "looking" at them. I have recently discovered that the average time spent before a work of art is less than 20 seconds.

"Portrait of the Artist" took shape in an effort to counter this troubling trend. It was the opportunity of taking the time to really look at the pictures. This need fused with the idea of putting together a personal panorama of monstrosity in art. I had a long-lasting passion for a few paintings that drew their inspiration from that theme, which I have been exploring since my first film. The transfigured face of a young girl by Hans Bellmer, the skin disorders of a Brazilian slave in a painting by Joachim da Rocha, Léon Spilliaert's emaciated figure in his self-portraits, the veiled and phantom-like gaze of Balthus' "Alice", and then Bacon, Caravaggio, and many more.

My desire to film those pictures was parallel to the desire of taking the close-up shot of a Hollywood actress. And then, I wanted to give Bertrand Bonello the leading role. His initial surprise gave way to curiosity, and he came on board with me on this unexpected adventure, excited and terrified at the same time. I imagined a gallery of strange and witty creatures for him to communicate with. His spouse, his producer, a historian, a young journalist and many others. The multiple faces and characters in this film are the expression of his own self. They all convey towards him. What makes this film exciting for me is the outcome of two different desires: mine and his.

It is the result of two separate universes, both unrestrained and uncensored. The film is in itself a unique creature.



## DIRECTOR INTERVIEW

### **Can you tell us how the idea of your new feature film was born?**

From the collision of different desires. On the one hand I wanted to make a film with several distinct characters, because my previous films were all focused on one or two main roles. Also I wanted it to be light. Or at least lighter and funnier than what I'm used to working with. And having Paris as the backdrop also played a part in it. I've always thought of making films as a great excuse for travelling and even if I've always love that city, it never really inspired me. But this time around, I really discovered another side of Paris that went hand in hand with not only the desire to film the paintings, but also the places that nest them. It was an incredible feeling to have the Louvre for ourselves during an entire day of shooting. To be so close to such masterpieces. I wanted to trick the watchmen so I'd stay there all night, alone, with the paintings, and look at them by candlelight, like in Carax's « Les amants du pont neuf ». I remember feeling the same way the first time I saw the Cranach room of the Gemäldegalerie. I felt I could live there with just a mattress and a drawing book. And from time to time, I'd walk a few rooms down and stare at the Dead Christ of Bellini.

### **Was it an obvious choice to have Bertrand Bonello in the main role ?**

I wrote the movie with him in mind. I can't explain why. When you work on a movie, you spend a lot of time with the actors, with everyone involved in it... and I guess I wanted to spend some time with Bonello. I also felt he had some kind of hidden talent for acting... I think the character he plays can also be seen as a weird, twisted portrait of himself. Like in cubism. But who cares for resemblance? Lies are as good as facts. Even better, sometimes.

### **How was Bertrand Bonello on set?**

He was a brilliant actor, very professional and generous. Totally devoted to the movie. Day or night, covered in red paint, he was always great.

### **How did you persuade him to be in front of the camera?**

I wrote him a letter. I told him I considered his films « monster flicks », because they're all about different creatures. I also explained some fragments of the film's story and he said yes, with no conditions. The shooting was a long, hard ride. Four years! Sometimes we would stop for 6 or 8 months and then get back together and take it from where we'd left off... Meanwhile, he directed « L'apollonide » (« House of Tolerance ») and « Saint Laurent » and I directed my first feature film, « Les gouffres » (« The sinkholes »), produced « Age is... », by Stephen Dwoskin, and wrote other projects. And during all this time, « Portrait of the artist » would reunite us every now and then. It was really charming and exciting in a way. It gave me the time to give free course to my ideas. There was no pressure. I felt like I was writing a very long novel. At some point we had no money, no schedule, nothing, really. But I felt everything was possible.

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## CREW

Director : Antoine Barraud  
Scriptwriter : Antoine Barraud  
Director Assistant : Matthieu Blanchard  
Director of Photography : Antoine Parouty  
Sound engineer : Gilles Bénardeau  
Makeup Artist : Carrie Arbogast  
Makeup & Special Effects : Fabrice Herbet, Betty Beauchamps  
Director (Chained Prométhée) : Bérangère Jannelle  
Editor : Catherine Libert  
Editor Assistant : Didier d'Abreu  
Sound Editor : Fred Piet  
Mix : Gilles Bénardeau  
Color Grading : Yannig William

Music : Bertrand Bonello  
Production Assistant : Valérie Parant  
Production Manager : Sandrine Surget  
Credits : Léonard Polli  
Production Director : Marie-Odile Gazin  
Producers : Vincent Wang, Cédric Walter, Antoine Barraud