



— THE VISITOR



74th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Panorama

A Bruce LaBruce Movie

PRESSKIT



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SCREENINGS IN BERLIN

SAT. 17th, 11:50 AM @ CINEMAXX 10
(MARKET SCREENING)

SAT. 17th, 10:00 PM @ INTERNATIONAL
(WORLD PREMIERE)

SUN. 18th, 3:30 PM @ CUBIX 9

WED. 21st, 10:00 PM @ INTERNATIONAL

THU. 22nd, 9:30 PM @ CUBIX 5

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**A NEW SEXUAL
VISION FOR THE UK**

**CREATING CHANGE,
ONE FUCK AT A TIME**

— SYNOPSIS

Discover Bruce LaBruce's reimagining of Pasolini's *Teorema*!

London, today.

A refugee washes up naked in a suitcase on the bank of the Thames. The enigmatic, sexually fluid stranger introduces himself to a bourgeois, upper class family. He is invited to stay on as an employee. The Visitor soon seduces each member of the family in a series of explicit sexual encounters. He will turn their world upside down as they are able to redefine themselves in new, radical ways.



A CONVERSATION WITH BRUCE LABRUCÉ



"The Visitor" is dedicated to Pier Paolo Pasolini. What does Pasolini mean to you?

He's the master. Pasolini and Fassbinder. When I was a film student, they were the homosexual auteurs who influenced me the most. Their films are often about issues surrounding sexual and psychological domination and submission, often in a political context, and how it relates to Fascism. Later, I did a theatre piece in Berlin called "Cheap Blacky" where I deconstructed and reinterpreted four films that were influential to me: Pasolini's "Teorema," John Huston's "Reflections in a Golden Eye," Fassbinder's "Whity," and Joseph Losey's "Boom!" In each case there is a character who is coded as a kind of hustler that comes to a family of some description and fucks them all, enacting a transformation, a liberation, or a destruction.

In his Trilogy of the Psychology of the Bourgeoisie ("Teorema," "Porcile," "Salò"), Pasolini critiques the fascistic overclass that uses sex/power to humiliate or control the people while also indulging in their own masochism. In "Salò," the Italian Fascists participate in the rituals of eating shit and being sexually humiliated; Pasolini's saying that it's not as simple as the powerful being dominant, and the people with no power being passively victimized. The sexual imagination is much more complex, like the idea of the British parliamentarian who likes to get spanked by a dominatrix or wear women's garters. In Pasolini's Trilogy of Life, sex is more about romanticizing the sub-proletariat. It's more animalistic, but not in a pejorative sense: he equates the peasants with dogs, but in the best sense, as the purest of creatures. He has a Spinozan philosophy that God exists everywhere, even in the most mundane and common people and places and things.

Your films are, stylistically, very different. "The Visitor" merges a sci-fi nostalgia with a hyper-contemporary cinematography

– strobe lighting and a pulsating Techno-soundtrack. Why did you choose this approach for the reimagining of Pasolini's Teorema?

My idea was to essay an updated take on "Teorema" both thematically and stylistically. In terms of style, I wanted it to be thoroughly new-fashioned by reconfiguring it in terms of contemporary queer aesthetics in particular. To do so, I enacted a kind of detournement, trying to stay true to the heart and soul of the original but making it ultramodern, even futuristic, adding a sci-fi alien invader element. The almost wall-to-wall techno soundtrack, by Hannah Holland, also reinforces the "pornification" of the original, taking its implied sex scenes to their logical and most extreme conclusion. My movie is also structured more like a porn narrative, with a greater emphasis on the liberating and highly explicit sex scenes.

Why did you cast the Visitor as a refugee? Was it because you were working in the particular context of post-Brexit Conservative Britain?

Pasolini's "Teorema" is set in Milan in the late sixties and reflects the social and political realities of that era. But as I was setting my reimagining of it in London in 2023, I thought it was crucial to have it be a reflection of the contemporary UK. It is a reaction to post-Brexit Conservative Britain, with all its attendant xenophobia and colonialist revanchism, and its concomitant puritanism and prudery. In the original, the Visitor, as he is generically named, is the same race and approximately of the same class as the bourgeois white family he invades. In my movie, the Visitor is a black refugee, a member of the working class who transforms and enlightens the family through his extreme otherness. His otherness is also seen through the lens of porn tropes, his sexual potency as a black man presented as a kind of projected fantasy of the family, a masochism that results

in the domination of the possessors by the dispossessed.

Can you speak more about your will to juxtapose right-wing ideology with a progressive sexual revolution?

I'm always willing to juxtapose right wing ideology with a progressive sexual revolution! The voice-over text at the beginning of the movie is composed of actual racist and xenophobic propaganda promulgated by the extreme (and not so extreme) right in Britain. Predictably, it is fixated on the sexuality of the refugees, the racialized other, positing them as predators and avatars of sexual potency, the "lock up your daughters" mentality. However, on the other side, many of the slogans used in the film are corruptions, in pornographic terms, of left wing, Labour Party slogans; for example, "Open Borders" becomes "Open Borders, Open Legs," or "For the Many Not the Few" becomes "Fuck for the Many Not the Few." It's a detournement that supports the pornographic agenda of the movie, enlisting more staid liberal values by "queering" and "radicalizing" them in a sexual context.

To what extent is "The Visitor" a celebration of Queer liberation?

"Teorema" is already a very "queer" film, but I wanted to perhaps "re-queer" it in way that reflects more contemporary ideas of queer liberation and political strategy. One example is the suspensions enacted by the Mother and the Maid. The idea was to find a current expression prevalent in queer culture – the idea of body modification, extreme performance art with a spiritual dimension – to invoke the levitation of the Maid in Pasolini's film (I still kept in the "real" levitation of the Maid to pay homage to the original). Another example is the casting of Ray Filar, who is trans masculine, as the daughter. In the original, the daughter's transformation has always been puzzling – she is the only character that seems to digress, ending up in a catatonic

state, a not unfamiliar role for women in cinema. In the spirit of new queer radicalism, the daughter in "The Visitor," who is visibly gender fluid and trans masculine, becomes pregnant by the Visitor. It's both a literalization of the fear of the Other overtaking the family and the country ("Overrule Britannia!"), the idea of the sexual conqueror, but also a feminist gesture of re-birth and re-generation in queer terms. And of course refiguring the Maid as a gender fluid man in drag also adds a queer dimension to the original.

You sometimes work with members of the cast that have little to no acting experience. In "The Visitor" some members of the cast were artists and performers over actors. What do you find beneficial with this approach?

Not only do most of the actors in "The Visitor" have very little acting experience, but they also have no experience with acting in porn movies (with the exception of Bishop Black, who plays the Visitor). I've always enjoyed mixing professional actors with non-actors, as well as getting porn actors who are never expected to dig into acting roles the opportunity to perform and create credible characters. "The Visitor" contains very little dialogue outside of the "Confessions," so the actors were performing archetypes more than characters, which is even more challenging – to make the characters compelling and "real" mostly through actions, gestures and expressions, and through style. There is also a strong element of camp in the movie which each of them, as queer performers, understood intrinsically. I think the performances are brilliant as they actors not only created compelling characters, but also performed highly explicit scenes, done in a somewhat conventional porn style, without any experience. I'd like to see most "professional actors" do the same so convincingly!

The production's trajectory was unusual. It started as an art project that evolved into a

feature film. Did this have an effect on the outcome of "The Visitor"? How do you think the public will perceive the film outside of a gallery / museum setting?

I have no idea. Like most of my work, it's too arty for porn audiences and too porn-y for art audiences, in particular mainstream arthouse film audiences. Most arthouse films that employ explicit sex scenes tend to make them disturbing, problematic, and grotesque, as something almost disgusting or clinical. In my work, the sex scenes are meant to be stimulating and to be used as pornography – to turn the audience on sexually as well as intellectually. Porn used to be consumed in public theatres, as a group experience, but not for a long time. Watching this film in a theatre may be challenging for some!

Sex features heavily in "The Visitor". As someone who works prolifically in the industry, would you call this film pornography or are these distinctions unhelpful in the film world and more largely in today's society?

I have come to believe that the distinction between porn and art, or porn and fashion, or porn and mainstream cinema, is increasingly irrelevant and redundant. We live in an era of regression, where nudity and explicit sexuality on screen are either regarded as something prurient and unnecessary, or used for pure sensationalism and publicity, a naughty gesture to boost the ratings. It's rarely presented as natural or commonplace, or just as something that is intrinsic to life. (Extreme violence, on the other hand, is considered not only natural, but as the purest form of entertainment and stimulation.) In artistic terms, I regard all pornographers as artists of some stripe. Some of them make bad art, but so do a lot of "real" artists!

Did you have any self-imposed limits on how far you would take the sex-scenes?

Beyond the obvious considerations of consent and age of consent for performers, my limitations are becoming increasingly unlimited! As one of the slogans in "The Visitor" goes, Sex Has No Borders!

Can you speak about the uncompromising use of religion in "The Visitor", self-flagellation, the dildo and filming in Lourdes. Why are you drawn specifically to the symbolism of Catholicism?

"Teorema" is a deeply religious and spiritual film, so I really felt I needed to address that in my reimagining. As a homosexual Marxist pauper-Catholic atheist, Pasolini embodied all the contradictions of his Italian identity, and through his dialectical approach to life, art, and religion he created the most profound and transcendent poetry and cinema. I'm not a Catholic, but as a homosexual I have a camp appreciation of the religion that borders on the spiritual. The historical lives of the Catholic saints are full of fetishes and perversions, and a lot of my work over the past twelve years or so has been about the intersection of religious and sexual ecstasy, and how fetishists worship their objects of desire with an intense religiosity. I extended the self-flagellation of the Maid in "Teorema" to auto-asphyxiation in "The Visitor," and added her penetration by the Visitor with the Jesus dildo, which could be considered the ultimate symbol of Catholic fetishism and submission to the Lord. Filming at Lourdes was serendipitous; I missed several scenes of the liberation of the family in London, so Becky of A/POLITICAL, who produced the film, suggested we shoot at The Foundry, their sister art space in the South of France, which happens to be very close to Lourdes. Becky somehow procured a permit, and it provided the perfect backdrop for the Maid's final spiritual transcendence.

BIOGRAPHY

BRUCE LABRUCÉ



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Bruce LaBruce is a filmmaker, photographer, writer, and artist based in Toronto but working internationally. Along with a number of short films, he has written and directed fourteen feature films, including “Gerontophilia,” which won the Grand Prix at the Festival du Nouveau Cinema in Montreal in 2013. As a photographer he has had numerous gallery shows around the world, including a photo exhibit called “Obscenity” at La Fresh Gallery in Madrid which caused a national ruckus in Spain. His feature film “L.A. Zombie” premiered in competition at the Locarno film festival in 2010 and was subsequently banned in Australia. His latest movie, “Saint-Narcisse,” was named one of the top ten films of 2021 by John Waters in Artforum.

LaBruce has had a number of notable film retrospectives, including one at the TIFF/Bell Lighthouse under the auspices of the Toronto International Film Festival in 2014, one at MoMA in New York in 2015, and one at the Cinematheque Quebecois in Montreal in 2022. His latest indie feature, “Saint-Narcisse,” was released internationally in 2021. His latest porn feature, “The Affairs of Lidia,” was released in 2022. His new photography book, “Death Book,” was published by Baron Book in 2021. A new book of his photography called “Photo Ephemera,” in two volumes, was released in 2022.

FILMOGRAPHY

BRUCE LABRUCE



FEATURES

2022	The Affairs of Lidia
2020	Saint-Narcisse
2018	It Is Not the Pornographer That Is Perverse...
2017	The Misandrists
2017	Ulrike's Brain
2014	Pierrot Lunaire
2013	Gerontophilia
2010	L.A. Zombie
2007	Otto; or, Up with Dead People
2004	The Raspberry Reich
1998	Skin Flick
1996	Hustler White
1994	Super 8 1/2
1991	No Skin Off My Ass

SHORTS

2020	Tom of Finland's "Service Station"
2019	Homage to Blow Job
2018	Valentin, Pierre & Catalina
2018	Scotch Egg
2017	Refugee's Welcome
2013	Defense de Fumer
2012	Offing Jack
2010	Weekend In Alphaville
2009	The Bad Breast; or, The Strange Case of Theda Lange
2008	Give Piece of Ass a Chance
1988	I Know What It's Like to be Dead.
1988	Slam!
1987	Boy/Girl
1987	Bruce and Pepper Wayne Gacy's Home Movies



**OPEN BORDERS,
OPEN LEGS**

**FUCK FOR THE MANY,
NOT THE FEW**

— BIOGRAPHY A/POLITICAL

A/POLITICAL explores radical knowledge through the principle of Cultural Terror. Working with artists and agitators, the organisation platforms voices that interrogate the critical issues and dominant narratives of our time. A/POLITICAL functions through interventions, commissions and a collection of contemporary art. Projects include ORDER with Democrazia; Black Flag with Santiago Sierra; The Game and INSURRECTION with Andres Serrano and Alamut with Laibach. Projects at The Bacon Factory include Pornopolitics and Other Precedents by Pyotr Pavlensky and States of Violence in collaboration with Wikileaks. A/POLITICAL is based in London, working closely with The Foundry and FOUNDRY UNIFORM in Maubourguet, Midi-Pyrénées.

— CAST & CREW

The Visitor	Bishop BLACK
The Father	Macklin KOWAL
The Mother	Amy KINGSMILL
The Son	Kurtis LINCOLN
The Daughter	Ray FILAR
The Maid	Luca FEDERICI

Director	Bruce LaBruce
Writer	Bruce LaBruce
Co-Writers	Alex Babboni, Victor Fraga
Director of Photography	Jack Hamilton
1st Assistant Director	Victor Fraga
Production Design	Lily Caccia
Script Supervisor	Alex Babboni & Victor Fraga
Production Manager	George Chetwode
Casting	Alex Babboni, Victor Fraga
Costume design	Ema Popaya
Makeup Design	Laura Jane Sessions
Hair	Michal Wolf
Editing	Judy Landkammer
VFX	Thorsten Rienth
Intimacy Coordinator	Lidia Ravviso
Sound	Chen Wissotzky, Kieran Simpson

CAST & CREW

Sound Mix	Manuela Schininà
Original Music	Hannah Holland
Color Grading	Andrea Gómez
Production	A/POLITICAL
Executive Producer	A/POLITICAL
Producers	A/POLITICAL, Alex Babboni, Victor Fraga
Country	United Kingdom
International Sales	Best Friend Forever

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BFF

