

I'M NOT A F**KING PRINCESS

Een film van EVA IONESCO



SYNOPSIS

I'M NOT A F**KING PRINCESS is een dapper en meeslepend filmdebuut van actrice en regisseur Eva Ionesco met o.a. steractrice **Isabelle Huppert** (LA PIANISTE, 8 FEMMES, LES VALSEUSES). Ionesco baseerde het scenario van I'M NOT A F**KING PRINCESS op ervaringen uit haar eigen jeugd en de relatie met haar moeder, de beroemde (erotische) kunstfotografe Irina Ionesco.

Hannah (Isabelle Huppert) en Violetta (Anamaria Vartolomei) vormen een buitengewoon paar: een onbereikbare moeder en een meisje hunkerend naar moederliefde, een grillige artieste en een model tegen wil en dank. Wanneer Hannah haar dochter vraagt voor haar te poseren, verandert het leven drastisch voor Violetta. Van een onschuldig meisje verandert ze in de muze van de Parijse kunstscène.

Wanneer is iets kunst? Hoe ver kan je gaan met kunst? Hoe ver kan je gaan als moeder?

I'M NOT A F**KING PRINCESS ging in wereldpremière op het filmfestival van Cannes 2011.

I'M NOT A F**KING PRINCESS/105 minuten/Frankrijk, 2011/Frans gesproken/ **12**   



I'M NOT A F**KING PRINCESS wordt in Nederland gedistribueerd door ABC/ Cinemien.
Beeldmateriaal kan gedownload worden vanaf: www.cinemien.nl/pers of vanaf www.filmdepot.nl

Voor meer informatie kunt u zich wenden tot Gideon Querido van Frank, +31(0)20-5776010 of gideon@cinemien.nl

CAST & CREW

Hannah..... Isabelle Huppert
Violetta..... Anamaria Vartolomei
Mamie..... Georgetta Leahu
Ernst..... Denis Lavant
Updike..... Jehtro Cave
Antoine Dupuis..... Louis do de Lencquesaing

Regie..... Eva Ionesco
Scenario..... Eva Ionesco
in samenwerking met Marc Cholodencko en Philippe Le Quay
Productie..... Les Productions Bagheera/ François Marquis
Co-productie..... France 2 Cinéma
Beeld..... Jeanne Lapoirie
Geluid..... Olivier Mauvezin
Montage..... Laurence Briaud
Kostuum..... Catherine Baba
Muziek..... Bertrand Burgalat

EVA IONESCO

Eva Ionesco is de dochter van de Franse controversiële fotografe Irina Ionesco. In de jaren 70 kreeg Ionesco's werk wereldwijde bekendheid; haar foto's waren te zien in kunst- en modetijdschriften, boeken en tentoonstellingen in Europa en Azië. Het meest bekend zijn de foto's die zij maakte van haar dochter Eva. Deze foto's, waar een jonge Eva in dezelfde artistiek erotische poses wordt afgebeeld als Irina's oudere modellen, leidden tot grote controverse binnen en buiten de Parijse kunstwereld. In 1976 zorgde Irina voor nog meer opschudding door haar dochter te laten poseren voor de Playboy en later voor de Spaanse Penthouse; Eva was toen nog maar 11 jaar oud. Irina verloor in 1977 haar ouderlijk gezag over Eva.

Eva Ionesco begon haar acteercarrière op 11-jarige leeftijd in *THE TENANT*, een film van Roman Polanski. Als student werd ze toegelaten tot de prestigieuze Dramaschool van Nanterre. In 2007 nam ze voor het eerst plaats achter de camera en maakte de korte film *LA LOI DE LA FORET*. Haar werk als fotografe werd op verscheidene exposities en in modetijdschriften vertoond. *I'M NOT A F**KING PRINCESS* is haar eerste speelfilm.

Op dit moment is Eva nog steeds met haar moeder in een proces verwickeld en communiceren ze slechts via hun advocaten. Eva wil de publicatie van de foto's tegenhouden, maar haar moeder weigert hier aan mee te werken.



ISABELLE HUPPERT

Isabelle Huppert is een van de grootste actrices van de Franse cinema. Op haar 30^e had ze al in meer dan 30 films gespeeld. Zestien van haar films waren geselecteerd voor de officiële competitie van Cannes. Huppert is één van de vier personen die de prijs voor Beste Actrice in Cannes twee keer in ontvangst mocht nemen (voor VIOLETTE NOZIERE (1978) en LA PIANISTE (2001)). Ze werd dertien keer genomineerd voor een César, de Franse Oscar, en won deze eenmaal voor haar rol in LA CEREMONIE (1996). Hupperts indrukwekkende carrière en inspirerende acteerpresentaties werden in 2005 gevierd met een wereldwijde expositie en een boek, waarin Huppert wordt geportretteerd door internationale topfotografen als Henri Cartier-Bresson, Helmut Newton, Richard Avedon en Annie Leibovitz. Als actrice werkte Huppert samen met grote namen als Jean-Luc Godard, François Ozon, Wes Anderson en Claude Chabrol.



Huppert speelde in meer dan 95 films, waaronder LA DENTELLIERE (1977), VIOLETTA NOZIERE (1978), SAUVE QUI PEUT (LA VIE) (1980), LOULOU (1980), HEAVEN'S GATE (1980), UNE AFFAIRE DE FEMMES (1988), SAINT-CYR (2000), LA PIANISTE (2001), 8 FEMMES (2002), I HEART HUCKABEES (2004) en I'M NOT A F**KING PRINCESS (2011).

INTERVIEW met EVA IONESCO

What were the origins of your film?

I've always wanted to write about this subject, which is rather painful for me and deals with my childhood. It was quite a long process, and it wasn't easy. I wrote this film ten years ago. At the time, I wasn't able to finance it. I put the project aside for a few years. I moved on to photography and I made a medium-length film. I also wrote other scripts.

What made you want to step behind the camera after your career as an actress making very assertive choices?

I've always wanted to step behind the camera. I feel much more comfortable there. Directing is definitely a way for me to confront strong stories that make me ask questions. I also felt the need to work with other actors because, although I love acting, the desire to direct is the stronger one for me today.

Did directing this autobiographical story help you?

Writing about very personal, intimate subjects doesn't allow for much freedom, contrary to what one might think. Especially because in personal stories there are always feelings that dominate and overwhelm imagination. I also want to direct the next installment of Violetta's adventures: first loves, friendships, nightlife and the Palace. Though that doesn't mean I want to limit myself to telling autobiographical stories.



What limits, if any, did you set for yourself concerning your personal background?

My mother began photographing me at the early age of four. But it was impossible for me to show a four-year-old child posing nude with her legs spread open. Because a little girl can't understand what's going on at the age of four. It's too violent. That's why I decided not to show the nudity. There's a great sense of propriety in my film, an intentional distance that the narration allows for. The idea for me was not to reproduce what I lived through. The little girl in the film was older, and it was very important for me that she understood certain situations. That was my limit. I kept my distance from where my personal trauma lies. I wanted the excessive part of the mother-daughter relationship to be seen through a prism that was not psychological realism; telling a real story using realism can't provide a true account of what was involved. On the contrary it reduces the power of fiction.

Your film relies on very visual ideas of mis-en-scène.

My film relies on necessities, which are those of the characters who want to triumph and become complete. The difficulty in this film was finding the right way to film photography. It was important to show a very strong visual universe and not take anything away from it, but also staying away from the photography itself. The theme “theft” through images that are meant to be eternal is present in the film. Hannah steals her daughter by photographing her and duplicating these images ad infinitum. The little girl is transformed, from a child she becomes a woman. From adoration to rebellion.

The crescendoing mother-daughter relationship touches on madness in a context that isn't insignificant. The character of the mother is unpredictable. It was the subject that guided me: there was something poisonous in this story and little by little the desire for a kind of ‘system’ was born inside me. A visual, sensory, and internal system that was set in motion and that the film needed to be built on.

Did you willfully abstain from imposing a moral point of view on your characters?

Indeed. I did not want to impose a moral way of looking at things. I leave the audience the choice. The little girl nevertheless has a moral impulse, a driving force even. It's vital to her survival.

How did your experience as an actress help you for your first feature film?

We shot with a very young actress – Anamaria Vartolomei – who was ten and a half years old. It was very important for me to explain the situations to her. We rehearsed with her a lot, also together with the other actors. We conducted mini-workshops running through a bunch of acting exercises with different texts, as well as clown work and cabaret exercises to help her be frontal etc... we did a lot of improvisation on hate, mother-daughter relationships and a panel of conflicting emotions. What I had learned as an actress really helped me work with the actors in my film.

How did you discover Anamaria?

We auditioned 500 little girls for four months. Anamaria saw the ad on Romanian website and showed up for the casting. We did a lot of tests and she quickly understood the way I wanted to work. She evolved each time I gave her direction and intuitively knew what had to be done, unlike the other candidates.

Will your film inevitably reopen the debate on child pornography?

The subject was already very taboo in the 80s. For a number of artists, the field was about transgression. We shouldn't forget that this was happening at the dawn of the Mitterrand years. It was more left wing than right, that's for sure. And, there was also punk... It's true that my film could start a debate on the limits of art, but it can't reopen the debate on 'how far can we go in undressing children?' The controversy actually arises from the fact that



these extremely sophisticated photos showcase a nude little girl. Without that, there would be nothing controversial.

Can you tell us about the character of Mamie (Violetta's grandmother), who is tied to your background?

Mamie prays to her icons all the time. She's shut away in something like adoration. For me, there was Mamie with her icons and Hannah with her images, both of them in a position of devotion before these representations. That's the link between these three generations of women in my film. Mamie comes from Romania. She anchors the film in origins. When she dies, everything falls apart. She protected Violetta, like old women in fairy tales.

There is also a phantasmagorical dimension to your film...

I set out to narrate my film like a story being told to children. My main thread was the fairy tale, with the horrible challenges that characters must go through in order to triumph at the end. We see both dimensions of the fairy tale here: the marvelous and the horrible.

Did you write the part of Hannah with Isabelle Huppert in mind?

I had wanted to work with Isabelle for a very long time. For me, the only actress capable of playing a character that radiates a literary eroticism was Isabelle Huppert. Isabelle is an icon who can become multiple women, which corresponds perfectly with the role of Hannah, a woman who lives in images. On top of that, I am truly in adoration of Isabelle. I'm sincerely moved by her work; it was an immense gift from her to agree to work with me.

How did you conceive the different silhouettes of Isabelle Huppert, which evoke actresses from Hollywood's Golden Age?

Catherine Baba, who had never done costumes for movies before, designed the costumes. I love American cinema and the Hollywood Golden Age, and so does Catherine. I wanted Isabelle to become one of these figures because there's a play on images that is set in motion in the middle of film, inside the curious apartment that runs through the blondness shared by the two heroines. We lose sight of who is the adult and who is the child. The roles are reversed. We also see a bit of Bette Davis because I wanted for Hannah to be likened to the bad women we loved in American cinema. Catherine Baba is highly specialized in 30s, 40s, 50s and 80s. I preferred to call on someone who comes from the fashion world, as she does, because it made more sense for the film. I wanted feathers for the birdlike, predatory, avian aspects, and veils for the close ups for Isabelle's eyes. As for Violetta, she's a figure of the 1950s, a bit more like Lolita.

How did the collaborations go with Bertrand Burgalat for the original score?

We're friends and I'm very fond of his music. I've wanted to work with him for a long time. He came to the film shoot and from then on, he started proposing music to me. He would then come to the editing room with his computer and his keyboard. I really wanted the music to be made with the film. We looked for tones together in the editing room. It was a constant exchange. Bertrand introduced me to the Mellotron, a musical instrument that was widely used in the 70s and sounds a bit like the roaring twenties. I also wanted to recreate the fairy tale atmosphere and go for more disturbing sounds towards the end of the film. English rock comes in during the part that takes place in London. Music takes on several roles in fiction: it isn't just layers of sound or an opening and closing soundtrack; there is a true musical creation that plays along with the film. Bertrand created an almost parallel dramatic composition that at times carries the film to new horizons. This musical narration opens up the film's space a bit more.

How did you come up with the set?

I wanted a set in which one could get lost, with mirrors where Hanah could look at herself all the time. It was important to me that it was all at once a setting, a mess, a seedy house full of ragtag objects, but one that changes appearance when the lights come on. It's also a place where death is very present. The apartment is a sanctuary that is also Hanah's own tomb, like in campfire films. This connection to B movies interested me, and I of course thought of Mario Bava and Brian de Palma's *Body Double*, but in a subliminal way. I also had silent vampire movies in mind because my characters are inspired by silent films.

SCREENDAILY

Painful personal experience is distilled into poignant drama in Eva Ionesco's promising first feature *My Little Princess*. Autobiographical events from the 1970s are shaped into a fairytale-like narrative illuminating the abusive nature of Ionesco's relationship with her mother Irina and eternal arguments over the limits of artistic freedom.

In the 1970s, Ionesco's mother rocked the Paris art world with photographs of her naked, pre-pubescent daughter. Ionesco recalls that the mother began posing her when she was just four. In *My Little Princess*, Violetta (Vartolomei) is ten when wildly unconventional mother Hanna (Huppert) takes the fun of dressing up in old clothes to a different level. Soon, Hanna has the career and acclaim she has always desired whilst Violetta is both seduced and appalled by her sudden elevation into an adoring adult world.

The core of *My Little Princess* is the love/hate relationship between mother and daughter who clash so frequently because they seem so alike in temperament. Huppert brings a feverish edge to Hanna suggesting the restlessness of an older woman perhaps only too aware that time and society are not on her side. The character takes her inspiration from the glamour of old Hollywood and in her frizzy blonde hair and lushly coloured gowns, Huppert's Hanna is like a cross between Jean Harlow and Baby Jane.

Anamaria Vartolomei was only 10 when the film was shot, but brings an astonishing emotional maturity to her character, conveying the conflicting emotions within Violetta and the righteous anger that may have saved her from her mother's clutches. Violetta has been encouraged to admire the beauty and tenacity of a Marlene Dietrich so it seems entirely plausible that she responds so enthusiastically to dressing and posing in the manner of *The Blue Angel*.

Her mother's need for her as a model invests Hanna with a sense of power and self-worth but also steals the innocence of her childhood and removes her from the world of her peers.

As the mother increasingly chooses to sexualise the daughter, Violetta turns into a Lolita figure, standing forlornly in the school playground in tight hot pants, swaggering into the classroom in full make-up and the kind of clothes that could only be deemed inappropriate. Throughout the film costume designer Catherine Baba does a fantastic job of finding clothes and accessories that define the characters and reflect the changes in their lives.

Ionesco directs the film with a pensive detachment and never judges the characters. She shies away from the more experimental sensibility that a director like Todd Haynes or Tom Kalin might have brought to the transgressive material creating a more conventional but also more accessible piece of storytelling. She captures a genuine sense of the affection that permeates these troubled, claustrophobic lives making what happens to them all the more upsetting.