

OKAYSS FILMS ET LES FILMS DE LA PASSERELLE

PARABOLA



GIORNATE
AUTORI
VENICE DAYS

UN FILM DE KARIM OUELHAJ



CELINE RALLET

JULIE BURG

AUDE LORQUET

MARIO GUZMAN

OKAYSS FILMS / LES FILMS DE LA PASSERELLE Présentent avec l'aide du STUDIO L'EQUIPE PARABOLA un film de KARIM OUELHAJ
avec CELINE RALLET AUDE LORQUET MARIO GUZMAN JULIE BURG et DANIEL VOISIN Assistant réalisateur LAURENT TIXHON son MAXIME MUCCIN
Régie STEPHANIE LE GROS Mixage LUC THOMAS Musique GIMMI PACE CYPRIEN MENENDEZ KARIM OUELHAJ Directeur de production
JEAN-YVES ROUBIN Producteurs délégués CHRISTINE PIREAUX THIERRY MICHEL produit par LAURENT TIXHON DANIEL DONKERS MAXIME MUCCIN
IBEN LEE LUCAS Conseiller technique MICHEL DUTRY (WIP)écrit monté et réalisé par KARIM OUELHAJ Distribution : Cinéart

«PARABOLA»

by Karim Ouelhaj

press book

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Okayss Films

Synopsis

This modern tragedy plunges us into a story at the crossing of several destinies.

First of all, there is Sarah. She is a prostitute, not by obligation, not by choice, but because it is an easy way to earn money quickly.

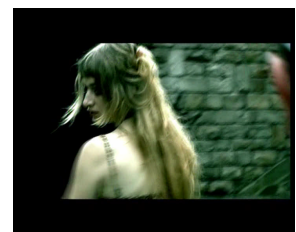
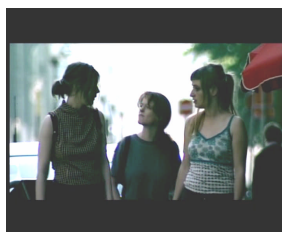
Then there is Zacharie, Sarah's ex-boyfriend, who remains like a shadow in her life. He stays at her place and lives a life of bad deals while squeezing money out of her. He feels reduced to the state of an affective parasite, and what remains of his love for her often turns into aggressive frustration.

Then, there are these two women that Sarah will meet by accident: a childhood friend, Axelle, coming back from nowhere and who is now a photographer who doesn't dare to show her work; and a young pregnant woman, Elena abandoned by her husband without any reasonable explanation.

All through the film, Sarah questions with lucidity what happens to her: all the little events, the little choices and the meetings that will provoke the inescapable drama.

Very quickly, the three women will share a very intense friendship, but the world around them will catch up with them. While entering each other's lives, all of them will bring about changes and turn their existences upside down.

But these changes will launch a pitiless process: while following the advice of her two friends and trying to get rid of Zacharie, Sarah will be caught up in a spiral of violence that will lead her to her own destruction. Her friends too will have to pay a high price. Together for the best, they will reach the worse case scenario.



"PARABOLA"

PRODUCTION NOTE

This film describes the broken destiny of three young women racked up in our society's turmoil and violence. They attempt to build up their lives again through a womanly bond and solidarity of the heart. With a clear and uncompromising vision, the director existentially strips down this generation in its confrontation with life's brutality.

In an intense approach and with no security nets, the film brutally puts us face to face with its characters. Its rhythm is clipped and pulsating and the writing is as jumpy and anxious as its characters are. This graphic, moving and true to life film expresses the distress, revolt and search for identity of the three women characters. It's as if all the actors played out their own lives, their own anxieties, their total distress, their own hopes and their never-ending search for love and happiness.

The uncompromising images and the intrinsic truth of this director's first film immerse us in the intimate tragedies of modernity. The film paints a picture of daily violence and of the insidious and intimate war that shatters people and rips the social fabric in the most marginal classes of young people stranded by the law of the jungle in cities.

In fragments of their hypersensitive lives, each woman tries to escape from her broken destiny. These three young women organise a daily and collective resistance to the world's violence, but also to that of men. This searing film is rawly and brutally true to life.

It brings forth a lesson of life, courage and resistance through the depiction of these three young women united through chance events.

Technical data

Principal actors:

Céline RALLET	Sara
Aude LORQUET	Axelle
Julie BURG	Hélène
Mario GUZMAN	Zacharie
Daniel VOISIN	David

Scénario by Karim Ouelhaj
according to a history of Daniel Donkers et Karim Ouelhaj

Director :	Karim Ouelhaj
Assistant director :	Laurent Tixhon
Photography :	Karim Ouelhaj
Sound :	Maxime Muccin
Original Music by:	Gymmi Pace, Cyprien Menendez, Karim Ouelhaj
Editing :	Karim Ouelhaj

Executive Producers:	Okayss films Daniel Donkers, Laurent Tixhon, Maxime Muccin, Karim Ouelhaj
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Associate producers	Les Films de la Passerelle Christine Pireaux, Thierry Michel
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105 min – 35 mm – couleur

Interview of Karim Ouelhaj about Parabola

1. The story of Parabola.

I had the idea of « Parabola » after several short films, and a first attempt to make a feature film. The question is of course to know where the idea came from and how the film was conceived?

Parabola comes from a particular frustration: from a previous film that I couldn't possibly achieve. So I decided to write a script that no one could stop me realising, I was determined to carry the film on my own and to realise it with friends that would understand my process of thought. For one year, Daniel (*Donckers, script doctor*) helped me with the development of the script while I was discussing the technical points and the feasibility with Laurent (*Tixhon, director's assistant*)

Parabola, is it a last chance film?

Yes, completely. I had reached a state where I was constantly questioning myself. Was it worth to fighting for, to ruin my life economically, psychologically and emotionally? Was it worth all that energy? I was trying to find answers to these questions and then we said to ourselves: "never mind, let's go, let's not care about the others, let's make the film we want to make, with our point of view." Then we received some material from the WIP (Wallonie Image Production). They usually only produce documentary films, but our film was conceived with a documentary approach. And we didn't have the choice anyway. Considering what little finance we had, we couldn't shoot on film or use large camera movements and all that. While making my short film, we always managed to find enough money for rails, or a steadycam,... But here, we didn't have anything! I'll always remember when Laurent and I were discussing our project in a café in Liège. Behind us was Jean-Christophe Yu (*Documentary film Director from Liège*) and he could hear our conversation, so he told us about the WIP. He said the WIP was looking for new types of projects, with new filmmakers. So we went there and we met Michel Dutry who really supported us, so the WIP lent us two digital cameras and some lights. For the shooting we all emptied our bank accounts, we had two or three hundred euros each to buy the tapes and pay for the sandwiches. At the end, we were so broke that it was our trainee technician (*Maxime Muccin*) who paid for the last sandwiches.

One can therefore estimate the budget of Parabola to be up to seven hundred euros, it sounds like a joke, doesn't it?

Yes, it is like a big joke in a way, but we all believed in our project and we didn't have the choice. That's how I presented the project to the actors. I told them that we didn't have any money but that we were completely free and that we wouldn't make any compromises. They had the choice: to be part of it with me or to give up straight away. They had all worked for me in the past and they knew what they could expect.

Did you arrange a casting session?

Yes, for Sarah's part of course. Actresses were afraid of that character, I can understand why. A lot of them refused. But my first choice was not Céline (*Rallet*). It was another actress who didn't feel able to take on the part, knowing that there was no possible concession. So I thought about Céline, whom I had worked with on my previous film. She

was playing the role of a junkie. I gave her the script and she was really happy. She was waiting for such an occasion, a challenge like that. From then on, our relationship became really intense and we realised we wanted to say the same things, the same lives and that we had the same perception of the reality.

What about the other actors?

For Aude (Lorquet), I also wanted to work with her again, we were getting on quite well. For me, it's not so important if an actor is good or not, but it is imperative that we get on well on a human level. And even more so when I can't pay them (*laughter*). Mario (Guzman), I knew him from a previous film as well and I've always found that he was very natural as an actor, and he is a friend as well. If he goes on like that, he'll be like Garry Oldman. His wife, Julie (Burg), joined us too in the adventure. My principal selection criteria was that I was choosing good actors who also wanted to learn the relationship with the camera. And it had to move nicely on a human level with all of them, Laurent, Céline, Mario, his wife Julie, Aude, me,... We were all in the shit, every one of us. We didn't have anything, there was a great solidarity on the shooting, and it was very intense humanly. For the costumes, the girls were exchanging clothes, we were trying to find arrangements to find some sandwiches and drinks, like I told you before, for the make up, it was with what we had...

After the equipment and the actors, there was still all the rest to be found: the sets, the locations, how did it go?

It was about daring. We were going into cafés and we were asking if we could shoot a little scene there. As we were in Liège, which has a very welcoming and supportive mentality, it was all right every time. People were happy to participate in the project. There was a lot of enthusiasm about the film.

How long did the shooting last for?

About a month, with a great sadness at the end of it, because the crew had to separate and we were all missing the whole adventure.

What about a shooting in video?

It makes all the difference. Even for a small production shot in 16mm, the direction is completely different, the editing is different, and so are the lights... everything. We had to adapt of course. There are two types of cinema now, cinema on film and cinema on DV and each has got its own particular rules. I'm now looking forward to setting up a project to be shot in film.

Did the doors start to open during the editing?

In fact, after the planned few weeks editing, we had arrived at a 2.40 hour version. I had to reduce it so I needed more editing time, something like two more months. But in fact, I didn't want to show the film to anybody. I didn't want to make the same mistakes I did on my previous film where I only had three weeks editing. Then the film had been judged even though it was not finished, and they didn't let me finish it. But for this one, I had to ask for more time, and the WIP who had lent us the equipment wanted to see the film, so I didn't have the choice and I showed that first version. People were surprised and they wanted me to finish the film. The Films de la Passerelle (*production company in Liège*) decided to support the post-production. So I continued editing up to a 1.50 hour version. Then the Films de la Passerelle proposed the film to the Commission Belge du Film to get a fund to finish it, but it was refused. It was hard because it was questioning the work accomplished so far. But we didn't give up, we had the will to carry on till the end. On the other hand we received

some very good news which gave us our strength back: Cinéart was interested in distributing the film in the Benelux. For a small film like ours, it was completely unexpected. And it was recognition from the world of cinema, some hope to live off it at last.

And what about the participation of Studio l'Equipe ?

It helped me to finalise my film in a professional way. The negotiations were made by the production company, it was not our responsibility anymore. Jean-Yves Roubin was the production manager, and the support he gave us really made me understand how much the crew believed in the film. At the end, I was more than happy to see the film in DTS in a large auditorium ! In fact, I was going to mix it at the same time as the Dardenne who were finishing their film « L'Enfant » of which we know by now as the great success. They were mixing during the day and I was arriving at 8PM to mix during the night. That was a great experience from which I learnt a lot. I learnt a lot of things about sound. Luc Thomas, the mixer, showed me the importance of mixing. He also did a wonderful job. And all along, I was receiving good feed back about Parabola.

The film was positively considered by the profession...

It's great of course. It reassured me, made me feel confident, helped me to go further and to believe in it even more.

It was often reproached as being too violent...

Of course « Parabola » is a different film, very particular; people don't all agree on it, reactions are split. The most important thing is that it doesn't leave anybody indifferent. Some people reproach its darkness and its violence. But I was fed up with that hypocrisy in relation to some so called violence, while the real violence is not there. I join Ferrara, Stone, Scorsese or Kitano when they use real violence while using a medium to take some distance from it, such as setting things off screen for example to remind you that it is cinema. On the other hand, you have all the blockbusters full of useless violence and where there is no distance to it, but they are considered as family entertainment. I really wonder about those who are judging « Parabola » like a too « violent » film.

2. The film Parabola

The first question is what does Parabola talk about ?

« Parabola » is the story of a prostitute. Not by obligation, not by choice, but just because it is an easy way to earn money quickly. She lives with a man who is a shadow of himself and who is only a parasite. The prostitute will meet two woman who will become her friends and who will share in her destiny. These two women will try to convince her to leave her boyfriend who is the image of what her life has become: a failure. But he will not accept it and will try to take his revenge in the worse possible way. So it's the story of a prostitute that starts badly and ends up even worse.

Why this choice of a narration interrupted by interviews?

During the whole film, she suffers in silence. In the interviews, she can talk, she can let go and she can have a clear view on what is happening to her. It also helps to try to find the right tone, it makes it more real. It's a way for her to take some distance, and it's comforting in comparison to the failure of her life.

Doesn't it break the rhythm?

No, the things that are said in the interviews strengthen the continuity of the film. People would have been bored by a more classic approach in the narrative process. Life is chaos, and these fragments of life interrupted by her reflection upon herself create a particular rhythm. So people get attached to her story more and more, they enter into it as if they were entering their neighbour's one's for brief moments.

And passing from one character to another with all these stories that interrupt each other?

It is the same logic: I give fragments of life without going to the end of them, to be realistic. Each story we start in our lives doesn't always find a conclusion. Each story doesn't have a beginning and a precise end. Well, sometimes, if one is pessimistic, it's death.

The lights are very particular too...

In fact this was not a question of budget. We could have had the necessary equipment if we wanted to. At the beginning, we started with some lights, but we were not happy. After some discussion with Laurent, we decided to shoot with natural lights. And I did a colour grading afterwards. But anyway, I don't like the video image, I have to say...

Was it all decided in the writing?

I'd like to say yes, but I knew I was going to make the film with no money so I didn't have to completely finalise the writing. The script was a base, a guide. A lot of things were decided during the rehearsals with the actors and during the editing.

A lot of improvisation then?

Yes, I gave the script to the actors while letting them the freedom to deepen their dialogues and to let go. The result was good or less good, but we were trying again until we found the right tone. Let's precise that it's not a thriller at all where the words had to be precise. They didn't have to repeat everything, word by word.

100% satisfied of the result?

It would be pretentious to say yes, and pretentious to say no. I don't know.

Is it the public who will judge? And the cinema critics? Who will be the most important?

It is time in fact..

The first film of which people are going to talk about, are you afraid of the critics??

No, not at all. To be afraid would mean to be frightened of not assuming. I assume the responsibility for the film with his qualities and its mistakes.

What is the principal quality of the film?

It is a sincere film. It goes straight to the essential things, it shows how impassioned I am about cinema.

And the mistakes?

It is a bit clumsy in a way... a mannered style. It has the same eternal mistake of any first film: trying to say too much at once, too many things maybe.

And what if you could do it again with more means?

It would be completely different of course. I would shoot it in Super 16mm, and so it would imply a completely different direction.

What if someone proposes to you to make a remake with more financial means?

No, I don't like redoing what I have already done.

Parabola by Karim Ouelhaj

A film for our desperate times

Karim Ouelhaj, a young filmmaker from Liège, got what he wanted by directing and producing Parabola, a daring first feature. With the help of Les Films de la Passerelle, the film should benefit from a post-production grant, enabling it to come out on the big screen.

Very few of the films have anything like the powerful energy of Parabola, which was shot in Liège by Karim Ouelhaj. Les Films de la Passerelle were impressed by the first images they saw, which had a sort of nervous compulsion about them, as though they were filled with a desperate need to foment revolt against a society that abandons so many of its own.

Parabola tells the story of the inexorable fall of three young women who are finding it hard to get over their difficult past. The actresses who play these three characters – Céline Ralet, Julie Burg and Aude Lorquet – threw themselves whole-heartedly into visceral roles Karim Ouelhaj had created. One of the great qualities of Parabola is to have created characters that are profoundly human and close to us, far distant from any bookish clichés. With extensive use of close-ups, the director manages to convey not only the emotions but also the doubts of that haunt his three protagonists. He goes far beyond a simply realistic portrayal of society, to build a story that in many respects takes the form of a tragedy with an unavoidable conclusion. Parabola has its fault, but most of all it's rich in promise.

Pierre Duculot.
Pour le cinéma Belge
Cannes - mai 2005

KARIM OUELHAJ

Rue de la Rose 2 - 4000 Liège

GSM: +32 (0) 497 14 84 63

E-Mail: karimolh@hotmail.com

Ne le 04 Mars 1974

ETUDES

1992 – 1996	Institut Marie-Thérèse a Liège <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diplôme d'art graphique• Qualification en publicité• Diplôme de gestion
1996 - 2000	Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts de Liège <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diplôme de vidéographie

CONNAISSANCE LINGUISTIQUE

Français	Langue natale
Espagnol	Niveaux moyen parlé et écrit
Anglais	En formation actuellement

EXPERIENCE PROFESSIONNELLE

NORD films	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistant réalisateur d'un documentaire fiction de J-C Riga et Léon Michaux « les gens d'en face. Simenon »
Ville de Liège	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Réalisation d'un long métrage « Marche ou Crève » pour une maison de jeune d'un quartier de Liège.
Exalite	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Réalisation de séquences vidéo personnalisées à des fin commerciales. Ces publicités sur le monde du tuning ont été tournées partout en Belgique
Artemis production	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistant régisseur du film « Un honnête commerçant » de Philippe Blasband
ICP (Image et communication production)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistant cameraman sur différents reportages produits par la RTBF pour les émissions : « Objectif PME »• Assistant cameraman et script sur une vidéo d'entreprise commandée par la société NMC pour la présentation du produit « ClimaSnap »• Assistant cameraman et preneur de son sur différents reportages sportifs produits par la RTBF pour l'émission « Lundi Sport »• Assistant cameraman et éclairagiste sur une vidéo d'entreprise commandée par le groupe Palmolive pour la promotion d'un produit nettoyant• Différentes fictions et clip vidéo conçus comme travaux inhérents au programme d'étude de l'école et en partie à titre de recherches personnelles

COMPANY PROFILE: **LES FILMS DE LA PASSERELLE**

ADDRESS: Rue de Renory 62 - 4031 Liège, Belgium
Phone: +32 4 342 36 02 Fax: +32 4 343 07 20 e-mail films@passerelle.be Website: www.passerelle.be

FOCUS

Founded in 1984, Les Films de la Passerelle specializes in documentary films committed on various levels: social, humanitarian, political and North-South relations.

European partners generally finance these productions, selected at numerous film festivals, awarded and broadcast worldwide. Les Films de la Passerelle received an award for the best producer from the European Union.

IN PREPARATION

LA VIE EXTRAORDINAIRE DE SŒUR SOURIRE

100 min Fiction film by Stijn Coninx

Production : Art & Cinéma, Les Films de la Passerelle, Pampa Production, TVI ,Wallimage.

LA RUE SANTA FE

Feature-length documentary 90 minutes by Carmen Castillo

Production : Les Films d'Ici, Les Films de la Passerelle, Le Centre du cinéma et de l'audiovisuel de la Communauté française de Belgique, Les Films à Lou, Parox.

IN PRODUCTION

CONGO RIVER

90 minutes feature documentary by Thierry Michel.

Production: Les Films de la Passerelle – Les Films d'Ici – Centre du cinéma et de l'audiovisuel de la Communauté Française de Belgique – RTBF télévision belge – VRT Canvas – V.A.F. – YLE – T.S.R. – VPRO – DGCD - Wallimage, EVS

Avec l'aide de la Loterie Nationale et des télédistributeurs wallons.

Collaboration et participation : Eurimages, Canal +, Promimage - Developed with the support of MEDIA

AGUAVIVA

52 minutes documentary by José-Luis Peñafuerte. Production: Les Films de la Passerelle – ARTE – RTBF – CBA

PARABOLA

Fiction film by Karim Ouelhaj - 105 minutes Production : Les Films de la Passerelle, Okayss films

THE DEN OF THIEVES

Medium-length documentary - 52 minutes by Gilles Remiche

Production : Les Films de la Passerelle, The Centre for Cinema and Audiovisuals at the French Language Community of Belgium.

RECENT FINISHED PRODUCTIONS

ALLENDE

90 minutes feature documentary by Patricio Guzman Production: Les Films de la Passerelle, Jba Production (France), CV Filmproduktions (Germany), Canal +, RTBF, WDR ARTE, EURIMAGES, Media Pro (Spain)

IRAN, VEILED APPEARANCES

90 & 60 minutes feature documentary by Thierry Michel Production: Les Films de la Passerelle, Les Films d'Ici, RTBF, VRT, ARTE France, CBA, RAITRE, Centre du Cinéma

THE PINOCHET CASE

109 minutes feature documentary by Patricio Guzman

Production: Les Films d'Ici, Pathé Télévision, Renn Productions, Canal + France, Les Films de la Passerelle, RTBF, Ministère de la Comm. Française, Canal + Belgique, Benece, Paco Poch, Patricio Guzman Producciones, Cinematograficas S.L., Canal + Espagne, ICAA, Telepiu (Italie)

"MOBUTU, KING OF ZAIRE"

135 min, serial (3 X 52'), 59 min Feature documentary by Thierry Michel

Production: Films de la Passerelle - les Films d'Ici- Image Création -RTBF Liège - MCF - CBA - Canal + - CEE - Eurimages - VRT - RTNC - ORF - MEDIA- Agence de la francophonie

Okayss

Asbl souhaitant promouvoir les projets audiovisuels au sens large, Okayss est née de la volonté d'un groupe d'amis qui se sont retrouvés impliqués dans plusieurs projets communs. Parabola a définitivement posé les bases des collaborations entre ces personnes d'origine et de formations diverses mais animées par un but commun : réaliser des projets de toutes sortes au niveau audiovisuel : films, longs ou courts, documentaires, clips, films de promotion.... Avec une préférence pour les projets artistiques.

Un nouveau long métrage est en cours d'écriture (titre provisoire : Opium), ainsi que la finalisation d'un documentaire (Mustafa Sari contre les graines de l'ombre) et la réalisation de trois courts-métrages en forme de triptyque (Huit-Clos).

L'asbl se veut ouverte à toutes collaborations dans le domaine audiovisuel.

Adresse : 2 rue de la Rose – 4000 Liège – Belgique e-mail : info@okayss.com