

Berlinale
 75^e Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Competition

Ari

A FILM BY LÉONOR SERRAILLE



International Press Agent

Brigitta PORTIER / ALIBI COMMUNICATIONS

brigittaportier@alibicomunications.be

International Sales Agent



info@beforfilms.com

www.beforfilms.com

GEKO FILMS and BLUE MONDAY PRODUCTIONS present



Ari

A FILM BY **LÉONOR SERRAILLE**

WITH

ANDRANIC MANET

PASCAL RÉNÉRIC THÉO DELEZENNE

RYAD FERRAD EVA LALLIER JUAN LOMANE DE DIETRICH

MIKAËL-DON GIANCARLI CLÉMENCE COULLON

88 min - France / Belgium



Synopsis

Right in the middle of a school inspector's visit, Ari, a 27-year-old student teacher, collapses. Angry with him for being a failure, his father kicks him out of the house. Emotionally raw, and alone in the city, Ari reluctantly forces himself to rekindle his relationships with old friends. As his memories of the previous months successively ebb and flow, Ari discovers that other people aren't doing as well as he imagined, and that perhaps he has been sleepwalking through his own life.

Director's Statement

When I was offered this project with the National Academy of Dramatic Arts in Paris, I gave myself some time to discover the class that I was entrusted with. Writing a screenplay after meeting the cast was a first for me. I was told, also: *"They are a sensitive group you'll see, fairly thin-skinned."*

At that stage, although my initial idea was to write a story about the difficulties experienced by young teachers, I wasn't dead set on the topic when I met with the actors, telling myself that I just wanted to get to know them and that nothing was set in stone. I was caught unawares by my interviews with them, which all lasted approximately one hour. I asked each and every one of them the exact same questions, in the same order. We spoke about the

past, the future, their life, dreams, memories of pivotal moments, childhood, connection with the present, and work; we discussed their hopes, their expectations, how they saw themselves ten years from now...

These questions made me feel more vividly, and in a very condensed manner, something that I found myself unable to name, something generational, a kind of angst, a lack of anchoring, discordant notes tainted with disillusionment, and a need to live very intensely.

This made me think of the questions that Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch asked in *Chronicle of a Summer*: *"How do you live? What is your job? Are you happy? Is there something you believe in? What is your daily life like?"*





With hindsight, I realize that at the time I was very much like Ari myself – meaning that I was lost, fragile, but with a great curiosity about others. It was through my exchanges with these actors that I unconsciously found the film’s form: a lonely soul meeting other lonely souls through conversation – and that’s all.

I felt like making a film where, seemingly, *practically nothing* happens, yet where speaking slowly brings a person back to life while – imperceptibly – a greater inner shift takes place, a sort of blossoming or epiphany for the main character, which deep down I also probably wished to experience for myself at that point in my existence.

When making a film, intentions evolve along the way. I was making this film to grasp something. It was a little like a treasure hunt; I couldn’t control

everything and it would be a lie to unveil a so-called “precise plan” as it sometimes takes a year or two to actually understand, precisely, what my most profound intention is.

What I do know, however, is that I wanted to make a film that followed its main character extremely closely, that took shape through the actor’s own vibe. There was for me a need to reconnect with certain lost emotions, to work on a portrait of a man that I don’t seem to find in films as a moviegoer. I also wanted to do some thinking about gentleness after reading Anne Dufourmantelle’s *Power of Gentleness*. And there’s the particular father and son dynamic in Stig Dagermann’s *A Burnt Child* that I’d been thinking about for a long time as well. From a filmmaker’s perspective, I was driven by the mystery of proceeding differently, meaning writing very quickly over a handful of months,

working with the cast ahead of time, with a share of improvisation. I also wanted to use actual 16-mm film, reconnecting with a greater vibrancy while shooting, a sort of awakening, going back to a less comfortable way of doing things, a more visceral, indeed organic approach.

With Youna de Peretti, the casting director for my two previous films, and Sandra da Fonseca, my producer since 2016, two incredibly precious collaborators who joined me in this adventure, we worked with the group during a 15-day workshop, having them play nearly all the characters, which were only roughly written. Then I rewrote once the cast had been defined, adding precision and further rewriting until the film shoot, and also in the end with my editor Clémence Carré.

The film shoot was conducted with a light, swiftly-

moving skeleton crew, similar to what you'd have for a documentary yet following a classic fiction approach. One film among others whose making is quite evocative from a preparation standpoint is Eliza Hittman's beautiful movie *Rarely Never Sometimes Always*, filmed in 2020 in the streets of New York city using 16-mm.

I watched Louis Malle's *The Fire Within* again at the time, and was captivated by the simple loop that the character follows, his question-filled wandering, the atmosphere and the possibility to explore an era, the present. The idea was also to use existing scenery as our background, with almost no set design. My crew and I sought to establish a flexible organization placing the actors at the very center to allow them to continually reinvent and flesh out their characters, with a great deal of freedom until the very end of the film





shoot. While making the film, I realized that what was truly most important to me was to film an actor or actress as they become more familiar with their character, what they transfer into the character and what this awakens in them in return, in a dialectical and somewhat unpredictable manner.

I really wanted to film the town of Lille and the surrounding region, where I lived for 10 years. I used to frequently go to the city's fine arts museum, where there is a painting by Odilon Redon that I find particularly fascinating, just like Carolus-Duran's *Sleeping Man*, whose title I seriously considered using for the film.

For this portrait-film, the North's winter light seemed to be at one with the sensitivity of the actor, Andranic Manet, who literally is the film's pillar. So, seemingly, not a whole lot happens. But with Ari,

every small occurrence opens the space for a slight shift, for a mirror, or a minute transformation; and because we enter a bubble, which is his own, we can see his feverishness, his wounds, his strength, everything that is profoundly intimate and which the tools of cinema allow you to shine a light on... just beneath the skin.



© Philippe Lebruman

About the Director

After studying literature in Lyon, Paris and Barcelona, Léonor Serraille joined the Fémis in 2009. On graduating, she directed a medium-length film shot on 16mm, « Body », with Nathalie Richard. « Montparnasse Bienvenue » (« Jeune femme »), her graduation script and first feature film with Laetitia Dosch in the title role, was awarded the Caméra d'Or at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival. Her second feature, « Mother and son » (« Un petit frère »), was presented in Official Competition at the 2022 Cannes Film Festival. « Ari » is her third feature film.

Cast

Ari
Ari's father
Jonas
Ryad
Clara
Aurore
The Gardener
Irene
Clyde
Inspector

Andranic MANET
Pascal RENERIC
Théo DELEZENNE
Ryad FERRAD
Eva LALLIER JUAN
Lomane de DIETRICH
Mikaël-Don GIANCARLI
Clémence COULLON
Clyde YEGUETE
Claire BODSON

Crew

Director
Screenplay & Dialogues
Cinematography
Editing
Sound
Casting
Costumes

Léonor SERRAILLE
Léonor SERRAILLE
Sébastien BUCHMANN
Clémence CARRE
Anne DUPOUY, Charlotte BUTRAK, Pierre BARIAUD, Niels BARLETTA
Youna de PERETTI
Céline BRELAUD

Producers

Sandra da FONSECA, Grégoire DEBAILLY

Production Companies

GEKO FILMS
BLUE MONDAY PRODUCTIONS

Co-production Companies

ARTE France - Agnès OLIER, Unité Fiction
WRONG MEN - Benoît ROLAND
PICTANOVO

Co-financed by

CNC – Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée
BNP Paribas Fortis Film Finance

International Sales

BE FOR FILMS

Technical Details

Sound Format	5.1
Aspect Ratio	1.66
Running time	88'
Genre	Portrait
Original version	French
Subtitles	English
Year of production	2025
Countries	France, Belgium