



Beware of the filmmaker!

Giulia Madron (December 04, 2013)



We interviewed Francesca Coppola, a successful Italian filmmaker based in Brooklyn and director of "Flamingos," a beautiful short movie realized in 2012 which premiered at MoMa and Lincoln Center in New York and that it's currently touring festivals.

She is Italian, she enjoys living in Brooklyn, and she has a passion: film. We are talking about Francesca Coppola, a very talented and successful filmmaker we met to talk about one of her movies that is hitting the scenes: Flamingos.

Milan, 1989. Set during the fall of the Berlin Wall, a period that goes down in history as the moment in which the world's destiny changed, this short movie tells the story of a middle-class family, who is experiencing a big change as well. Alice is a nine year old girl who spends a day at the park (to see the flamingos, indeed) with her dad, Paolo, a man who is going through an identity crisis. The story



digs deeply into the mind of a daughter, who perceives that something between her parents is cracking, and of a husband, who got lost and seems to not find his way back. Francesca Coppola puts on stage the delicate relationship that exists between these two people who are connected by a string that could break at any moment altering the precarious balance on which they hung.

Flamingos, realized in 2012, premiered at MoMa and Lincoln Center as part of [New Directors/New Films](#) [2] and is currently touring festivals. Its creator, Francesca Coppola, is an accomplished filmmaker based in New York, and member of the Brooklyn Filmmakers Collective. After working in Italy as a producer, she moved to New York to become movie director. Flamingos is not her only project. She has worked on many feature films like [Zipper](#) [3], a documentary about Coney Island that was in the movie theaters this summer, and she has worked in some of the most prestigious offices in New York (such as The Weinstein Company and Robert De Niro's office at Tribeca Productions).

We asked Francesca to unveil some curiosities about this emotional and yet very rational movie.

How did you come up with the idea of this story?

After living in New York for a few years, I wanted to go back to my hometown to make a film. The story is autobiographical; it's my personal story. It comes from the memories I have growing up in Milan, and dealing with my parents' divorce.

Why did you set the story back in 1989? Any particular reason?

I grew up in the late 80's beginning of the 90's and it was a period of political disillusionment. The Berlin Wall was the ultimate fall of a political idea that had been dead for years, and that was buried with one epic and meaningful gesture. In a sense, it mirrors the marriage of Paolo and Marianna. It's been over for a long time, yet it ends with a resolute action: one of them leaving the house and closing the door behind. The wall crumbling down for me is a symbol that stands for the marriage ending.

I was also interested in exploring the characters' alienation from the world around them. There is a big political drama going on in the background, compared to which, in the eyes of history, the small drama of a family is meaningless. There is something tragically ironic about this. It happens every day in our lives, and it can be very lonely. I was interested in depicting a small dramatic event no one will remember but the few people involved on the backdrop of a bigger historical event that the protagonists barely notice.

The hardest and the easiest thing in creating the movie.

Dealing with such a personal story was definitely daunting. I felt very vulnerable because I was deeply involved in the project, and was afraid that other people wouldn't care as much. But then again, this is why I make films! I like the challenge. Casting the 9-year-old version of myself and my "father" was also difficult, because I was looking for something very specific. But then I was lucky to find Sofia Cotromano and Fabio Ghidoni. They truly brought something to the project and they were incredibly supportive.

The easiest thing... nothing was easy! ;)

With your movie you captured a very emotional moment between a father and his daughter, even though, throughout the movie you know this emotional link will break soon. How do you think your story has impacted the audience? And you?

It has definitely helped me process my own issues with my parents' divorce. I remember that day the film premiered my father was there, and I realized that I never spoke to him about my feelings regarding what had happened; When the film started playing my heart was pounding. I also thought that this is why I make films; it's my way to communicate with the people around me.

I was very excited to see that the audience responded very well to the film. A lot of people were



moved by the film, because they could relate to it. They understood what was going on.

This is not your first movie. How did previous experiences shape you as a filmmaker and what do you think was different in the case of the Flamingos?

My previous films were much different. "Flamingos" is the first film where I decided to tackle a personal story and take some more risks. I think I had gotten to a point where I wanted my work to be more of a reflection of myself. Having had plenty of experience on set as a director has definitely helped me not make the same mistakes. But you always make mistakes! So hopefully I'll do an even better one next!

Flamingos has been presented at MoMa and at Lincoln Center and it's gaining success. Do you think you would want to continue working in Italy or in the US? Where do you think it's easier to work?

Working in Italy is much different. I don't know if it's easier or harder. I think that wherever you are you can strive to make meaningful and engaging work, which is never easy and always challenging. I'm lined up to work on a few projects here now, so I'd like to stay and then go back to Italy later.

Are you working on future projects?

Yes! I'm writing a feature script based on the life of photographer Francesca Woodman, it's a coming of age story. As a producer, I'm also looking forward to continue working on Zipper, a documentary about Coney Island, and on a new project called "Evaporating Borders", about immigration in Cyprus.

Flamingos is a deep emotional story about a loss. A loss that marks people's life but that is something everyone experience to become the persons they are today and who found their path through life. And we can definitely say that Francesca found that way.

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