

MICHEL SEYDOUX PRESENTS

LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD

QUINZAINE
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT
CANNES 2013



A FILM BY ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

SILENZIO - DUBBIN - ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY ET PASCALE MONTANDON-JODOROWSKY

AVEC BRONTIS JODOROWSKY, PAMELA FLORES ET JEREMIAS HERSKOVITS. CHEF MONTAGE: MARYLINE MONTHEUX. CHEF OPERATEUR: JEAN-MARIE DRELIJOU A.S.C. CRÉATEUR DES COSTUMES: PASCALE MONTANDON-JODOROWSKY. MONTAGE: JEAN-PAUL HURIER. MUSIQUES ORIGINALES: ADAN JODOROWSKY. MUSIQUES ADITIONNELLES, ARRANGEMENTS ET ORCHESTRATION: JON HANDELSMAN. PRODUCTEUR EXECUTIF (ET DIRECTEUR DE PRODUCTION): XAVIER GUERRERO YAMAMOTO. UNE COPRODUCTION FRANCO-CHILIENNE: CAMERA ONE / LE SOLEIL FILMS. ÉCRIT ET RÉALISÉ PAR ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY. PRODUIT PAR MICHEL SEYDOUX, MOISES COSIO ET ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY.

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LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD

A FILM BY ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

With Brontis Jodorowsky, Pamela Flores, Jeremias Herskovits

Runtime: 130 min

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L'ODE À L'ARGENT

Money is like blood,
it gives life if it flows.

Money is like Christ,
it blesses you if you share it.

Money is like Buddha,
if you don't work,
you don't get it.

Money enlightens those who use it
to open the flower of the world,
and damns those who glorify it,
confounding riches with the soul.

There is no difference between conscience and death.

There is no difference between death and wealth.

SYNOPSIS

This movie is an exercise of an imaginary autobiography, not in the sense of fiction, because all of the characters, places and events is real, but in the fact that the deep history of Alejandro Jodorowsky's life is a constant effort to expand imagination and open its limits, to apprehend its therapeutic potential.

Alejandro Jodorowsky was born in Tocopilla, a small town in the middle of the Chilean desert. It was there that he discovered the key aspect of reality and confronted the strong education of a family without roots. With imagination as his main ally, we will understand how one of the principal creators of the last decade was born, understanding why the point of encounter in all his work in different disciplines (Poetry, Philosophy, Cinema, Tarot, etc) is his great imagination.



INTERVIEW WITH ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD is the first time you've made a film with explicitly autobiographical material, but your writing remains very fantastical and dreamlike, as if you are dreaming about your childhood in a poor little village in Chile, and as if you are providing the keys to better understand both your life and your work. What does this film represent for you as a kind of return to your roots, 23 years after you made your last feature?

To me, this film is like a mental atomic bomb. I have written books and invented a therapy called "psychomagic" that involves acts to heal family-related childhood psychological problems. LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD is not just a film, but also a kind of family healing because three of my sons act in it. I am going back to the source of my childhood, to the same place where I grew up, in order to reinvent myself. It's a reconstruction that has reality as its starting point but which does not allow me to change the past. We shot the film in Tocopilla, the village in which I grew up and which hasn't changed for 80 years. We shot it in the very street where my parents' store was located. It was the only store that had burnt down on that street and I rebuilt it for the film. We retouched a few things; we painted the movie theater and repaired the tarmac on the road. When I was a child, the village rejected me because of my physical appearance – I had pale skin and a pointed nose, and they

called me "Pinocchio". I was the son of Russian Jewish immigrants in the middle of a land purchased from Bolivia and peopled with Amerindians. That made me a mutant in the eyes of the locals. I had no friends and I spent my childhood shut away in the library with my books. In the film, I show how the children teased me for being circumcised. But through the film and thanks to the improvements we made to the town, I became the savior, the perfect son of Tocopilla in the end. They even gave me a diploma. I am the hero who brought along the magic filter to save the people, and that filter was cinema.

It's a very poor and isolated area. What was it like, going back to your place of birth?

It was like a dream. Everything is poisoned by pollution from the factories and mines. We got a little sick and there was no hotel. I found the place exactly as I'd left it. Just like in the film, my hair had grown long and I had it cut in the same barber's shop. I went to school with the barber's son who cuts the boy's hair in the film. To me, art must be more than art. You have to create something other than a show to amuse or inspire admiration.



Your previous films also involved experiences that went beyond the medium of cinematography. SANTA SANGRE was a violent form of therapy in which you directed your own sons.

That was because the producer, Claudio Argento, wanted a horror movie with a serial killer. I made it but in my own way. When I made EL TOPO, I wanted to make a western in order to connect with American audiences, because they hadn't understood my first film FANDO AND LIS. With LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD, I was lucky enough to discover a young man named Xavier Guerrero, who told me we were going to qualify for subsidies from the Chilean government and things started to move very quickly. In the end, the government didn't give us anything but we prepared the film with a little money and from some savings I'd made. I met up Michel Seydoux through the documentary on DUNE, and I hadn't seen him for a long time. I thought he was mad at me because we hadn't managed to make DUNE so I didn't want to talk to him – I was too proud. However, we realized that we were still friends and that we'd both suffered from not having made DUNE, so I had the idea to talk to him about this new project. He asked me what I wanted and I said, "I want between \$1-2 million to make a film about which I'll tell you nothing. I just want you to leave me alone, I want you to trust me and I'll show you the film when it's finished." He immediately said yes. I never cry but I found his response so moving that I had to go away before I burst into tears. That's what I call a miracle because in the end, I was able to make the film exactly how I wanted, in total freedom.

You describe your parents as eccentric characters. Your father, played by your son Brontis Jodorowsky, dresses like Stalin and your mother only communicates by singing. How much of that is invention and how much is reality?

I have to say that playing my father changed my son's life! Everything is true, or almost. My father was a Communist and he always dressed like Stalin. My film is an adaptation of my autobiographical novel, "La Danza de la Realidad", and I wrote another

book, "El Niño del Jueves Negro" in which I imagine my father was going to kill Ibáñez [President of Chile from 1927-1931 and from 1952-1958]. That part was imaginary. He wanted to do it but he never carried out his plan. My mother wanted to be a singer but she never was. In the film, I realize my parents' dreams and I realize my own dream of bringing them together again and creating a family.

Your visual universe is very baroque and crazy but the directing remains sober, frontal and almost theatrical, with fixed frames which perhaps stem from your experience in comic strips.

I told my director of photography, Jean-Marie Dreujou, that I wanted a "clinico-photographic" image rather than an esthetic one. I wanted beauty to spring from the content, not the form. So we decided to eliminate the form, to put nothing between the camera and what was being filmed, to not make any unnecessary camera movements. I also got rid of all the equipment and paraphernalia that normally clutters up shoots, stripping it back to just a camera operator with a Steadicam. When the film was finished, I reworked all the colors using digital technology.

This film represents a technical prowess because it was made in a very original way. I killed one esthetic to create another. I limited myself to the essential. The editing and the shots owe a lot to comic strips and the film advances like a river.

In LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD, you return to a kind of folklore associated with your filmmaking: the world of the circus, crippled beggars, etc. Was that part of daily life when you were a child?

Of course. The disabled people were there when I was a child, and I returned to film them in the same place. The village was full of men who'd been mutilated in mining accidents and dynamite explosions that had gone wrong. Disabled and unable to work, they were thrown out in the street like dogs. They'd get drunk on methylated spirits.

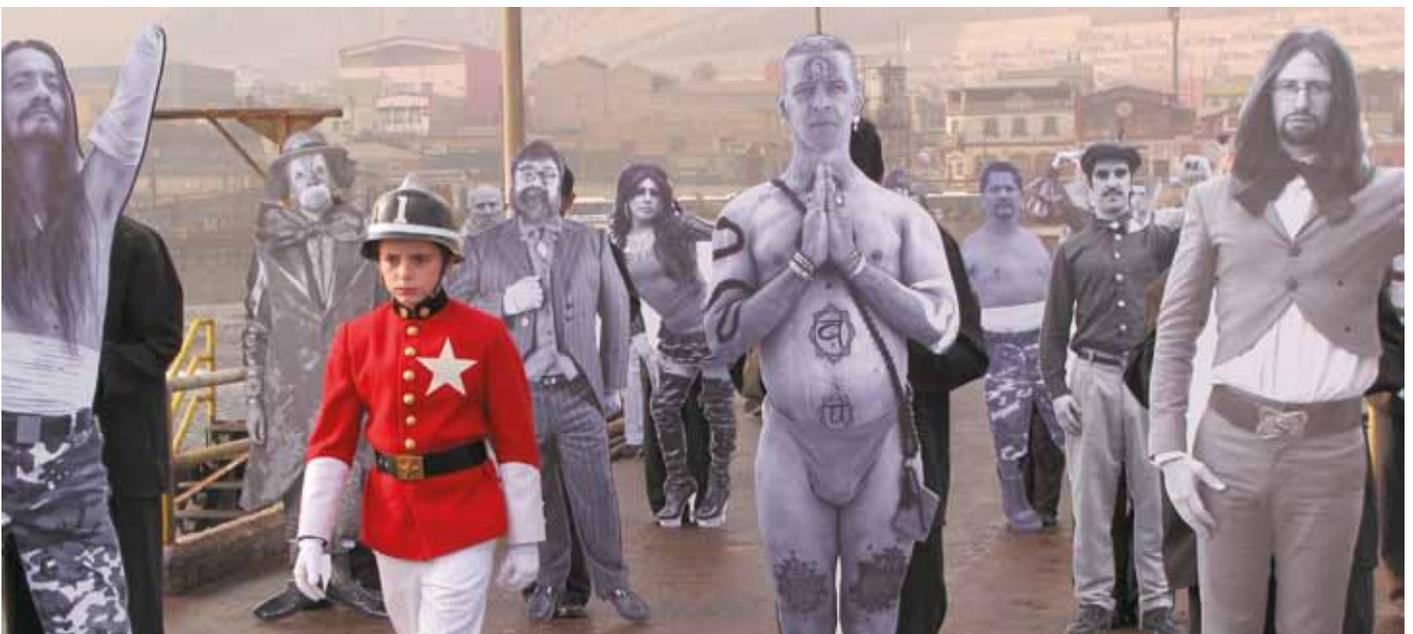
Through LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD, we understand that all the images and weird characters that appear in your films don't come from cultural or cinematographic references, but from your own life.

My mother had huge breasts and I looked for an actress with a big bust. If you show a voluptuous woman, one thinks of Fellini; if you show a dwarf, one thinks of Buñuel; if you show a freak, one thinks of Tod Browning. But in fact, that was my life in my village. All the elements of my childhood are there.

Today, there are many directors who have revealed their admiration for your films such as Nicolas Winding Refn, Gaspar Noé and Rob Zombie...

It's a pleasure and a balm to heal my wounds. I feel like a radiator full of scars. My life as a director hasn't always been easy. In Mexico, they wanted to lynch me after the screening of my first film FANDO AND LIS. I have been a victim of insults and persecution. THE HOLY MOUNTAIN took 30 years to be recognized. I waited a long time to make my films and I always refused to make commercial movies. EL TOPO was an underground hit in New York and that was a very happy time for me, but it got more complicated subsequently. But I never stopped imagining films that I would never make. There are hundreds in my head. I hope that LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD will be the start of a new cycle, a renaissance of my own cinema which has always been a struggle against the industry.

Interviewed by Olivier Père on 3 May 2013 in Paris.



ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY, PANIC CINEASTE

Alejandro Jodorowsky has only made seven feature films in the space of 45 years, but he is hugely popular among fans of cinematographic oddities. In the 1970s, he was a star of the underground scene, a genuine superstar of international artistic counter-culture. Having been unable to make films that matched his outrageous ambitions (he failed to film *DUNE* before David Lynch, as recorded in a documentary screened in this year in Directors' Fortnight), he dedicated himself for many years to literature, comic strip and teaching tarot, before returning to directing with *LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD*. Jodorowsky is a visionary filmmaker, a fashionable category in an age of psychedelia, with a new permissiveness in terms of sex and violence, which saw him favorably compared to Kubrick or Fellini, but also to many forgotten minor masters. Jodorowsky has always found himself between the two, worshipped by fans of rock or science fiction for his abundant imagination and the power of his imagery, but not really taken seriously by the guardians of the cinematic temple who considered him like a lovable cowboy who'd overdone it on the magic mushrooms. Yet Jodorowsky is an incredible cineaste, each of his films tracing the path of an adventure, vision or experience ever more crazy, terrifying or dangerous, comparable to the work of Dario Argento or Werner Herzog.

Alejandro Jodorowsky was born in Chile in 1929 to a family of Russian Jews exiled to South America. He became a circus clown and puppeteer in Santiago. French by adoption, he studied mime with Marcel Marceau, crossed paths with Maurice Chevalier, and in 1962 founded the Panic Movement (in homage to the god Pan) with Roland Topor and Fernando Arrabal. He directed his first films in Mexico. *FANDO AND LIS* (1968) is based on a play by Arrabal that prompted uproar during its screenings. *EL TOPO* (1970) is a baroque and bloody western, but also a metaphysical trip, in which pop art meets Artaud's theater of cruelty, in a blend of mysticism and Latin religiousness which was a big hit with

hippies around the world. *EL TOPO* ushered in the trend for weekly midnight screenings in America and Europe, which movie fanatics flocked, like Catholics to mass, to watch titles like *PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE*, *PINK FLAMINGOS* or *ERASERHEAD*. Buoyed by this success, and backed by some celebrity admirers like John Lennon and George Harrison, Jodorowsky imagined an ambitious, esoteric superproduction, which mixed several mystical practices and beliefs, from the kabbalah to Zen meditation. *THE HOLY MOUNTAIN* (1973) is the Divine Comedy on acid, vaguely inspired by *Mount Analogue* by René Daumal, with its succession of shocking and grotesque apocalyptic tableaux that culminate in the quest of a group of men and women led by a guru (played by Jodorowsky) for immortality. Filmed in Cinemascope and Technicolor, *THE HOLY MOUNTAIN* was incredibly spectacular and provided the spectator with a unique experience, with the oft-impressive scope of its visual delirium and the convulsive beauty of its images, with obscenity, fantasy and reality mixed up in a vast poetic landscape. At the time, Jodorowsky declared himself "the Cecil B. de Mille of the underground", which perfectly defined his approach; one that was extremely megalomaniac, but which was also capable of taking the least initiated spectator by the hand and leading them into the midst of a debauchery of crazy ideas through elementary emotions and sensations.

In 1980, Jodorowsky directed an adventure film for children that was just as poetic as his previous films but much less violent. *TUSK* is a fable about the parallel destinies of a young English girl and an elephant born on the same day in India. The story was beautiful but the overall experience turned sour, the film suffering from flawed production. Its failure made Jodorowsky turn away from cinema. After a nine-year cinematographic hiatus, *SANTA SANGRE* (1989) is another of Jodorowsky's hallucinatory titles. The Italian producer Claudio Argento, brother of Dario, asked the filmmaker to direct a horror movie in Mexico. Jodorowsky accepted the invitation without

watering down the craziness of his imagination or limiting himself to the rules of the genre. *SANTA SANGRE* was a great success for the Panic artiste, marking his least esoteric film, whilst retaining strong links with magic and religion. It's also a more narrative and accessible film, since *SANTA SANGRE* is a psychoanalytical melodrama or fantastic thriller, just more crazy, bloody and moving than most other films of the same genre. Although the digressions and provocations are still as striking, *SANTA SANGRE* remains one of the most unforgettable accounts of madness and obsession in contemporary cinema, in the same mold as Tod Browning's masterpieces *FREAKS* and *THE UNKNOWN*. The central character in the film, at different ages in his life, is played by two of the director's sons, Adan and Cristobal (who was known as Axel at the time the film was made). They took part in an experience at once traumatizing and liberating, and which continues with *LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD*. The shoot became a family exorcism, an emotional

and human experience going beyond the sole domain of making a film, as always with Jodorowsky.

After this success, the flop of *THE RAINBOW THIEF* (1990) starring Omar Sharif and Peter O'Toole was all the more bitter. The director did not seem to have been fully committed to the film, which remains his least personal. On the contrary, *LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD*, which brings to an end a 23-year absence from the big screen, is a kind of autobiographical essay in which Alejandro Jodorowsky invites the audience on an introspective journey, with a moving return to his own childhood and his fantastical universe.

Olivier Père



FILMOGRAPHY

2013	LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD
1990	THE RAINBOW THIEF
1989	SANTA SANGRE
1980	TUSK
1973	THE HOLY MOUNTAIN
1970	EL TOPO
1968	FANDO AND LIS (FANDO Y LIS)



CAST

Jaime	Brontis Jodorowsky
Sara	Pamela Flores
Alejandro as a child	Jeremias Herskovits
Alejandro as an adult	Alejandro Jodorowsky
Carlos Ibáñez	Bastian Bodenhöfer
Don Aquiles	Andres Cox
Anarchist	Adan Jodorowsky
Theosophist	Cristobal Jodorowsky



CREW

Directed by	Alejandro Jodorowsky
Screenplay	Alejandro Jodorowsky
Produced by	Michel Seydoux Moises Cosio Alejandro Jodorowsky
Line producer	Xavier Guerrero Yamamoto
Director of photography	Jean-Marie Dreujou (AFC)
Costume design	Pascale Montandon-Jodorowsky
Original music	Adan Jodorowsky
Musical supervisor	Jon Handelsman
Mixing	Jean-Paul Hurier
Sound engineer	Guadalupe Cassius Sandy Notarianni
Editing	Maryline Monthieux

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