

BAD SEED

The Marina Experiment

The LAB section of the Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival contained the most beautiful discovery, the first film by American director Marina Lutz, *The Marina Experiment* - eighteen extraordinary and exciting minutes. The title makes it unclear whether the experimentation announced refers to the spectator, to the making of the film, or to the childhood of the filmmaker, who was manipulated, harassed and hounded by her father, a photographer and filmmaker with destructive voyeuristic behavior. The reality of the film is clear from the beginning: the film's bias is defined by a collection of incriminating documents. A subsequent interview with the filmmaker also reveals that the film initially existed only in the form of a patchwork intended for a therapist. The editing of the old documents - often cropped photos, movies, soundtracks - is intended to avenge the manipulation endured by a young New Yorker in the 60's, the only daughter of a gifted Jewish photographer and an Italian mother, a disciple of Mussolini.

All the documents now mixed together come from an incredible collection found by the filmmaker twelve years after the death of her father. The young Marina, from her childhood to her teen years, was hunted day and night by the lenses and the microphones of Abbot Lutz, a former war photographer, who staged cruel scenarios and helped himself to ambiguous shots demonstrating latent pedophilia. One is reminded of Yoko Ono's sad and famous documentary *Rape*. If no individual document is in itself proof of guilt, the accumulation and layering of images and sounds leave no doubts. The documentation makes it possible, paradoxically, to remove the temptation of a family settling of scores: the idea here is not to replace her father's vengeful exhibition with obscenities, but to reuse the existing nauseating and toxic material to give birth to the artist within her. "*I was watched throughout my childhood, but I was never seen,*" says Marina Lutz today. Rarely has found footage revealed so many intimate issues.

The Voyeur

Marina Lutz presents us with no holds barred *Trauma Cinema*. She rejects the logical comparison to Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation*, which she judged as "self conscious" ("*We do not care about what happens to the characters in this film*"). The only connection she is comfortable with is that of Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom*, with a nod to John Waters ("*If someone throws up while watching one of my films, it's like getting a standing ovation*"). She hopes to take advantage of her stay in France to meet Sophie Calle. Marina Lutz is turning *The Marina Experiment* into a triptych that will exploit other dimensions of the archives. The music is by Mick Harvey, Nick Cave's collaborator. The seductive culture of the bad seed serves as an antidote as well as a subtle contrast against paternal clichés.

Thierry Méranger