



**FRAMES OF MIND: THE FILMS OF PETER GREENAWAY**

# Goltzius and the Pelican Company

*+ extended intro by Peter Greenaway (Saturday 10 December screening only)*

Peter Greenaway, one of the most inventive, ambitious and controversial filmmakers of our time, returns to the cinematic arena of *The Draughtsman's Contract* in a film that brilliantly showcases his legendary trademarks for breathtaking visual framing and provocative subject matters.

Winner of Best Film Out of Official Competition at the Rome Film Festival, Greenaway's latest feature explores the life of celebrated 16th century Dutch painter, printer and engraver, Hendrik Goltzius, and is his second biopic on Dutch Masters after *Nightwatching*.

Greenaway's film is based on the trip taken by Hendrik Goltzius in 1590 to Colmar in Alsace to find finance to support his printmaking business in The Hague.

'I had a little trading company. The Pelican Company. Engravers, printers, an actor or two. All of us specialised in words. We traded in words. Words in books. Words on the stage. I wanted to make pictures as well as words. Pictures in books. Pictures on the stage.'

Goltzius, played by the Dutch poet and actor, Ramsey Nasr – since 2009, Poet Laureate of the Netherlands – makes a contract with the local governor, the Margrave of Alsace, played by American Oscar-winning actor, F. Murray Abraham, to make a set of 50 illustrated volumes of the erotic stories of the Bible in return for cash payments and, most significantly, for the presentation at his court of six biblical erotic dramas acted out by his company of printers and actors.

'We conceive of producing an illustrated Old Testament with the familiar moral stories told with a singular new freedom.'

'In other words "dirty books"? How much?'

The six presentations are based on the all-time prohibitive taboos of Voyeurism, Incest, Adultery, Paedophilia, Prostitution and Necrophilia, dramatised through the stories of Adam and Eve, Lot and His Daughters, David and Bathsheba, Joseph and Potiphar's Wife, Samson and Delilah, and from the New Testament, Salome and John the Baptist.

The Alsatian court and the Dutch company, arguing political and religious difficulties in a Europe divided so recently into Catholic and Protestant camps, become embroiled in a drama of freedom of speech and freedom of ideas that destroys the Margrave and activates the commission.

Since Goltzius's occupation is printmaking and engraving, the drama is enacted very self-consciously through the business of visual representation both of the late 16th century and of now. Goltzius, in 1600, commentating on his own adventures of ten years before, says:

‘Every new visual technology is expensive. And every new visual technology, sooner or later, gets into bed with lechery.’

Such a statement in 1600 would not at all be irrelevant when applied to much contemporary activity in photography, cinema and the Internet.

## **Director’s Comment**

It is a curiosity that every new visual technology in its infancy seems to gravitate towards erotica and pornography – oil painting in the 1520s, photography in the 1840s, cinema in the 1900s, the Internet in the 1980s and Second Life in the 2000s. Is it a flagrant demand for attention, a cynical attempt to attract funding, or a real curiosity to see what that attention-puller of all time – sex – will look like in a new visual language?

This same characteristic could be said to apply to the newly enhanced technology of the visual imagination of the 1590s – the printed metal engraving. And perhaps its major practitioner at that time was Hendrik Goltzius, Dutch master-printer with a damaged right hand, whose mastery of the burin was unrivalled across Europe. It helped of course that the current fashion in visual imagery was the Mannerist enthusiasm for the nude in every conceivable position, contortion and exhibitionist display that could be imagined.

As with all new technologies, the new and often experimental equipment involved was expensive, and the makers had to persuade, coerce, beg, plead, bribe and fight to find the funding to support it.

*Goltzius and the Pelican Company* is the story of the Dutch engraver Hendrik Goltzius persuading one of the petty German princelings of Europe to pay for an expensive printing press to make a limited deluxe edition of a boldly illustrated Old Testament. And like a good advertising executive hoping to clinch a deal, Goltzius is prepared to sweeten his offer by getting his Pelican Printing Company from The Hague to fulsomely dramatise six erotic biblical tales that demonstrate the six sexual taboos – voyeurism, incest, adultery, paedophilia, prostitution and necrophilia. They start with the very first copulation tutored by Satan on Adam and Eve and continue with the story of Lot and his daughters, the adultery of David and Bathsheba, the seduction of the under-aged Joseph by Potiphar’s wife, the demonisation and disloyalty of Delilah and the humiliation of Samson, finally skipping to the New Testament to finish with the tale of necrophilia of Salome and John the Baptist.

Since it is 1590 and Europe is about to plunge into savage and bitter religious wars, tensions are high in the German court striving for liberty of thought, but there is another more insistent and constant perpetual war that never ends, has few truces, no peace conferences and persistent aggression, and this is the never-to-be-resolved battle of religion and sex.

## **Production notes**

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## GOLTZIUS AND THE PELICAN COMPANY

*Director:* Peter Greenaway

©: Kasander Film B.V., Portpic Ltd,

MP Film Productions, CDP S.A.R.L.

*In co-production with:* Film & Music Entertainment,

MP Film Productions, CDP

*Presented by:* Kasander Film Company

*In association with:* Head Gear Films, Metrol Technology

*Executive Producers:* Phil Hunt, Compton Ross

*Producer:* Kees Kasander

*Writer:* Peter Greenaway

*Director of Photography:* Reinier van Brummelen

*Editor:* Elmer Leupen

*Production Design:* Ben Zuydwijk

*Costume Design:* Marrit van der Burgt, Blanka Budak

*Composer:* Marco Robino

*Sound Design:* Huibert Boon

## Cast

F. Murray Abraham (*the Margrave of Alsace*)

Ramsey Nasr (*Hendrik Goltzius*)

Kate Moran (*Adaela*)

Giulio Berruti (*Boethius*)

Anne Louise Hassing (*Susannah*)

Flavio Parenti (*Eduard*)

Lars Eidinger (*Amos Quadfrey*)

Halina Reijn (*Portia*)

Pippo Delbono (*Samuel*)

Lisette Malidor (*Ebola*)

Vincent Riotta (*Ricardo del Monte*)

Stefano Scherini (*Johannes Cleaver*)

Francesco De Vito (*Rabbi Moab*)

Nada Abrus (*Marie*)

Netherlands-UK-France-Croatia 2012©

128 mins

This film contains a scene involving 'black face' and includes racist language.

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## FRAMES OF MIND: THE FILMS OF PETER GREENAWAY

### Peter Greenaway Shorts Programme 2

Thu 1 Dec 17:50; Mon 12 Dec 20:50

### Peter Greenaway Documentary Programme

Fri 2 Dec 20:35; Sun 11 Dec 12:00

### Haunted Generations: The Lingering Legacy of the Public

#### Information Film

Fri 2 Dec 18:10 (+ intro by author Bob Fischer); Wed 21 Dec 20:30

### Black Pond and Other Short Films

Sat 3 Dec 12:00; Wed 14 Dec 20:35 (+ intro by filmmaker

Jessica Sarah Rinland)

### Rembrandt's J'Accuse

Sat 3 Dec 15:20; Mon 19 Dec 20:50

### Nightwatching

Sat 3 Dec 18:00; Mon 19 Dec 18:00

### The Tulse Luper Suitcases: The Moab Story

Sun 4 Dec 12:10; Sun 18 Dec 12:00

### The Tulse Luper Suitcases, Part 2: Vaux to the Sea

Sun 4 Dec 15:15; Sun 18 Dec 15:30

### The Tulse Luper Suitcases, Part 3: From Sark to Finish

Sun 4 Dec 18:10; Sun 18 Dec 18:20

### Eisenstein in Guanajuato

Wed 7 Dec 20:55; Thu 29 Dec 18:15

### Peter Greenaway in Conversation

Fri 9 Dec 18:20

### The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover

Fri 9 Dec 20:30 (+ intro by Peter Greenaway)

### The Greenaway Alphabet + H Is for House

#### + Q&A with Saskia Boddeke

Sat 10 Dec 12:00

### Goltzius and the Pelican Company

Sat 10 Dec 14:15 (+ Q&A with Peter Greenaway); Wed 28 Dec 18:00

### A Zed & Two Noughts

Sat 10 Dec 17:30 (+ intro by Peter Greenaway)

### The Tulse Luper Suitcases: Antwerp

Sat 10 Dec 20:50; Thu 29 Dec 20:50

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