



## NEW RELEASES

# Àma Gloria

### Àma Gloria

Director: Marie Amachoukeli

Production Company: Lilies Films

Executive Producer: Bénédicte Couvreur

Casting France: Christel Baras

Casting Cape Verde: Solange de Castro Fernandes

Screenplay: Marie Amachoukeli

Director of Photography: Inès Tabarin

Editor: Suzana Pedro

Animation: Marie Amachoukeli,

Pierre-Emmanuel Lyet

Music: Fanny Martin

Sound: Yolande Decarsin, Fanny Martin,

Daniel Sobrino

Cast:

Louise Mauroy-Panzani (*Cléo*)

Ilça Moreno Zego (*Gloria*)

Abnara Gomes Varela (*Fernanda*)

Fredy Gomes Tavares (*César*)

Arnaud Rebotini (*Arnaud*)

Domingos Borges Almeida (*Joachim*)

France 2023

84 mins

Digital

A BFI release

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### Marie Amachoukeli on 'Àma Gloria'

In Marie Amachoukeli's bittersweet coming-of-age drama *Àma Gloria*, Cléo (an extraordinary six-year-old, Louise Mauroy-Panzani) leaves France to spend a sun-drenched summer in Cape Verde, where she visits her former nanny, Gloria (Ilça Moreno Zego). Living in Gloria's hometown alongside her family, Cléo jealously discovers that she isn't the only child who Gloria cherishes. While the film is exquisitely tender and shot with an enthralling tactility, over a brisk 83 minutes, it's also awake to the social circumstances that have shaped the intricate, and somewhat taboo, love between its main characters. Amachoukeli, in her first solo feature, empathetically captures both the passions and politics of this unique bond.

*Your family employed a nanny while you were growing up. What do you remember most about her?*

She's still in my life, she still calls me 'daughter' all the time. It took a long time for me – too much time, actually – to understand or even ask myself who she is, where she came from, who her family were.

*The nanny-child relationship doesn't have an established social form in the way the nuclear family does. How did you tease out the boundaries of this relationship?*

That was one of the questions of the movie. You're paid for a job, but what happens when you move beyond its boundaries? Cléo and Gloria have a covert relationship in a way, one that can't be official: they don't talk about it, because others won't accept it.

*Can you talk about casting Louise Mauroy-Panzani and Ilça Moreno Zego, who had never acted before?*

I asked the casting director [Christel Baras] to avoid agencies [for child actors]. She basically found Louise fighting with her little brother near our office and then asked her to audition. Louise was the first actor I met and I was very, very impressed by her. When I looked at her, I felt like she was 80 years old. She has an old soul; she seems to come from outer space.

I met a lot of nannies from Morocco, Chile and Thailand, and they all had the same story: they had to leave their children to come to Western countries and raise the children of people with more money. And then I met Ilça, and it was her story too. I rewrote the movie with her backstory, her village and her language, Creole – I took Creole lessons for a year and a half.

*There's a very clear postcolonial reading of the film, about how the legacy of European colonialism informs Cléo and Gloria's relationship. How important was that broader political narrative?*

That's funny, because it's always foreign countries where people ask me that directly. I'm never asked that in France, which is part of the problem. There's something taboo about it: we don't want to use the word postcolonialism, but yes, of course it's the result of colonialism. That was the point of the movie, to say that [this type of relationship between Cléo and Gloria] exists.

*How did you balance the intensity of Cléo's perspective with the film's documentary qualities?*

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From Fri 7 Jun

**I Used to Be Funny**

From Fri 14 Jun

**Àma Gloria**

From Fri 21 Jun

**Green Border** Zielona granica

From Fri 21 Jun

**Bye Bye Tiberias** Bye Bye Tibériade

From Fri 28 Jun + Q&A on Fri 28 Jun 18:00

**Sleep Jam**

From Fri 12 Jul

**About Dry Grasses** Kuru Otlar Üstüne

From Fri 26 Jul

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From 7 June

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From 7 June

**Network**

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I always shoot like that, trying to put my fiction into documentary sequences. I write a very simple structure, I go and meet people, and then I rewrite everything. I'm adjusting all the time between what [stories] I want to tell and what the actors bring to me.

But the film is also based on sensations. The camera is so close to Cléo that you have to become her yourself: you feel like her, you eat like her, you love like her. We used a 50mm focal length, which I love because you can feel the texture and the movement. That was the whole point of the *mise en scène*: feel the world, don't just see it.

*Can you talk about the animated sequences that punctuate the film?*

The sequences were painted on glass, frame by frame, by 12 painters. The technique was really scary – I couldn't see the results until the end – but it felt like I was at the beginning of cinema, like in its early days. I wrote these sequences to express the feelings that Cléo herself couldn't express: they are totally her subconscious.

*Your previous directing work was with other people. What changed when you shifted away from that collaborative model?*

When we were three directors [on 2014's *Party Girl*, with Claire Burger and Samuel Theis], there was no place for other collaborations with the DOP or editor. It was almost too much: we were monsters! But with *Àma Gloria*, I discovered for the first time what collaboration was, because I was alone. We were a very small team, but I had the luxury of choosing them.

*What films did you watch when you were a child?*

My favourite movie when I was a kid was *Mary Poppins* [1964]. And when I was around ten, my favourites were James Ivory movies. I watched *Maurice* [1987] 200 or 300 times, maybe more.

*What can stories about children tell us about love or jealousy or pain that stories about adults can't?*

There's something about the sincerity of feelings – something you can't fight against. You're very humble when you see a child playing the main character.

Interview by Annabel Bai Jackson, *Sight and Sound*, June 2024