



## BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

# The Draughtsman's Contract

### The Draughtsman's Contract

Directed by: Peter Greenaway

©: Peter Greenaway

a British Film Institute production

In association with:

Channel Four Television Company

Producer: David Payne

Head of Production: Peter Sainsbury

Production Assistant: Marie Meyrick

Production Officer: Peter Broughan

Production Secretary: Fiona Latto

Assistant Director: Andy Powell

Castling: Lucy Boulting

Written by: Peter Greenaway

Lighting Cameraman: Curtis Clark

Rostrum Camera: Hugh Gordon

Camera Assistant: Luke Cardiff

Gaffer: Steve Blake

Assistant [Gaffer]: Paul Woods

Grip: Simon Archer

Stills: Simon Archer, James Merrell

Editor: John Wilson

Assistant Editor: John Taylor

Art Director: Bob Ringwood

Design Assistants: Jane Hamilton, Digby Howard

Calligraphy: Kenneth Breese

Props: Michael Hunter, Tommy Raeburn

Construction Manager: Charlie Simmons

Carpenter: Bob Coleman

Painter: Alan Brown

Rigger: Gordon Wright

Costume Designer: Sue Blane

Costume Design Co-ordinator: David Perry

Costumes Made by: Colin MacNeil

Assistants: Ellen Cairns, Caroline Bayliss

Hat Makers: Michael Jones, Linda Eke

Wardrobe: Anthony Williams, Sue Langridge

Make-up: Lois Burwell

Assistant: Christine Allsopp

Wigs Created by: Peter Owen

Wig and Hair: Peter King

Stylist: Robbie Gardner

Titles: Hugh Gordon

Laboratory Supervisor: Len Brown

Lighting: Lee Electric (Lighting)

Laboratory: Kay Film Laboratories

Music Composed by: Michael Nyman

Musicians: Alexander Balanescu, John Harle,

Elisabeth Perry, Steve Saunders, Keith Thompson,

Stina Wilson, Ben Grove, David White,

Malcolm Bennett, Edward Pillingier, Ian Mitchell,

Michael Nyman

Counter-tenor: Chris Royle

Music Producer: David Cunningham

Music Recording: Studio 80

Music Engineer: Martin Rex

Sound: Godfrey Kirby

Sound Assistants: Clive Osborne, Bob Doyle

Sound-mix: Cinelinqal Studios Ltd

Dubbing Mixer: Tony Ancombe

Dubbing Editor: Doctor Lion

ADR: Lionel Strutt

ADR Studios: Mayflower Studio London

Drivers: Gillian Strachan, Safi Farrah,

Rupert Christie, Michael Coulson

Cast:

Anthony Higgins (*Mr Neville*)

Janet Suzman (*Mrs Herbert*)

Anne Louise Lambert (*Sarah Talmann*)

Neil Cunningham (*Thomas Noyes*)

Hugh Fraser (*Louis Talmann*)

Dave Hill (*Mr Herbert*)

David Gant (*Mr Seymour*)

### Peter Greenaway on 'The Draughtsman's Contract'

*The Draughtsman's Contract*. A film that is 40 years old. Made in 1982 about events in 1694. Elaborate, stylised, enjoyable, spiteful and mysterious, a film in black, white and green. With sheep. Eminently enigmatic. Always associated with frames, so much so indeed that a framing device of the late 1600s is on hand to remind you that what is outside the frame is strictly irrelevant. The French newspapers described Peter Greenaway as a cinematic dandy and the English, once they had passed their enthusiasm for being outside their comfort zone, slowly warmed to it. Shot on 16mm blown up to 35mm for cinema release, it surprised the art-cinema circuit and irritated some English cinematic luminaries to declare that filming in England was no longer tenable if such films were going to be made there henceforth.

I am delighted at its re-mastering. I remember it being made on a somewhat unorthodox filming procedure – being shot on super-16mm and enlarged to 35mm for cinema release. I was concerned that it should be seen as an English landscape film situated around a somewhat arcane proposition of 'draw what you see and not what you know'. Your eyes must be solely your guide. I never expected it to be as successful on the art-cinema circuit. It's a story about a 'frame-up' both in metaphor and for real, and the film frame is unremittingly ubiquitous with the appearance of that late 17th-century framing device to remind you of the tyranny of the film frame. The French especially enjoyed it though a French newspaper said I was a cinematic dandy and the English newspapers, at first, until they settled on a more relaxed approach were appalled at its literary, theatrical, and visual pretensions.

The costumes by Sue Blane surprised and delighted me, so many layers, cuffs, tails and frills tailored to exhibit the body. When everyone wore white the Draughtsman was out of step and wore black. When everyone wore black the Draughtsman wore white, an arrangement to persistently demonstrate the artist being out of step manoeuvred by the wealthy establishment whose controls were out of reach however hard he tried to learn and catch up. The music by Michael Nyman surprised and excited and delighted me, energetic often to a point of frenzy and exhibiting much irony.

When we had finally finished filming in the Groombridge Kent fields we wanted to start again. I wrote a sequel called 'The Hedgecutters' about trimming boundaries. Since the draughtsman was too blinded, damaged and too dead to be resuscitated, the follow-up hero was to become his overdressed effete servant primed to die with cut extremities. But it didn't work. For a start the title was too mundane and too artisanal. It was winter and the vegetation was becoming leafless. The next film titled *A Zed and Two Noughts* was calling. Leaving a film behind is always painful.

It was truly an idyllic experience to film in unusually persistent English summer weather that only collapsed when the weather finally broke when the characters appropriately began to complain in 1694 about the arrival of storms. It was another delightful appropriate reference of the film being determinedly self-reflexive, a persuasive reason and excuse for me evermore to insist that when you were watching a Greenaway film you were only watching a film and should never ever possibly consider that you were doing anything else.

Peter Greenaway, Summer 2022 (extracted from *The Draughtsman's Contract* BFI Blu-ray booklet)

David Meyer, Tony Meyer (*The Poulencs*)  
Nicholas Amer (*Mr Parkes*)  
Suzan Crowley (*Mrs Pierpoint*)  
Lynda Marchal (*Mrs Clement*)  
Michael Feast (*the statue*)  
Alastair Cummings (*Philip*)  
Steve Ubels (*Mr van Hoyten*)  
Ben Kirby (*Augustus*)  
Sylvia Rotter (*governess*)  
Kate Doherty (*maid*)  
Joss Buckley (*Mr Porringer*)  
Mike Carter (*Mr Clarke*)  
Vivienne Chandler (*laundress*)  
Geoffrey Larder (*Mr Hammond*)  
Harry Van Engel, George Miller (*servants*)  
UK 1982©  
107 mins  
Digital 4K

## BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

### **The Draughtsman's Contract**

Sun 1 Sep 18:40; Tue 10 Sep 20:30

### **The Piano**

Mon 2 Sep 18:10; Wed 4 Sep 18:00 + intro by  
Rosie Taylor, Curator, BFI National Archive; Sat 5  
Oct 15:45

**Les Demoiselles de Rochefort** The Young Ladies  
of Rochefort

Tue 3 Sep 20:30; Sun 15 Sep 12:10; Wed 25 Sep  
18:05

### **Rear Window**

Wed 4 Sep 20:45; Sat 7 Sep 12:20; Mon 16 Sep  
14:30; Thu 19 Sep 20:45; Wed 2 Oct 18:00 + intro  
by film and talks programmer & writer Nadia M.

Oliva

### **Do the Right Thing**

Thu 5 Sep 18:00; Fri 20 Sep 20:40

### **12 Angry Men**

Fri 6 Sep 20:45; Sat 21 Sep 12:30; Sun 29 Sep  
12:30

### **Le Trou** The Hole

Sat 7 Sep 15:15; Mon 9 Sep 18:00; Sat 5 Oct 20:30

### **Rio Bravo**

Sun 8 Sep 17:45; Sat 28 Sep 14:50

### **UK Premiere of restoration: The Exterminating**

**Angel** El angel exterminador

Tue 10 Sep 18:20; Wed 25 Sep 18:10 + intro; Tue 8  
Oct 20:50

### **The Miracle Worker**

Wed 11 Sep 18:10 + intro by Clare Baines, BFI  
Inclusion Partner and Founder, Crip Club; Mon 23  
Sep 14:30; Fri 27 Sep 18:15; Tue 1 Oct 20:50

### **Hunger**

Thu 12 Sep 20:30; Thu 26 Sep 20:40

### **Black Narcissus**

Fri 13 Sep 14:30; Sun 22 Sep 11:45

### **Barton Fink**

Sat 14 Sep 20:45; Thu 3 Oct 20:45

### **King of the Hill**

Tue 17 Sep 20:45; Fri 4 Oct 18:10

### **The Servant**

Wed 18 Sep 18:15 + intro by Ruby McGuigan, BFI  
Programme and Acquisitions; Wed 25 Sep 20:45;  
Sun 6 Oct 12:30

### **The Incredible Shrinking Man**

Tue 24 Sep 20:40; Mon 7 Oct 18:40

There is probably a greater jump between *The Draughtsman's Contract* and my last film than on any previous occasion. The jump often seems irreconcilable since I'm beginning to concern myself with much more conventional modes. But then I think that there's a lot of similarity with what went before. And I shall certainly cut this film very much with past considerations in mind. There are very strong visual associations with *Vertical Features Remake*. This concern with the draughtsman seeking out particular characteristics of a landscape and pursuing them in an almost minimalist way. And the way the film is structured to keep going back to the same landscapes at different times of the day, to see how the light has made shapes, forms, verticals, how they've changed and what new significance they have at different times of the day.

My prime interests are the landscape, the ideas involved in the sheer interplay of plot, the symmetry, and those concerns characteristic of the whole sub-text of gardening; also the games that can be played with the dialogue, its content and the forms it takes. It's a very literary film, the dialogue has been very carefully worked out for puns and conceits. The whole thing is an elaborate charade, a conceit, which the 17th century enjoyed doing, witness Restoration Tragedy. One of the characteristics of my filmmaking is a whole series of stories, anecdotes, apocrypha which all come together and create a total world.

Unfortunately, we didn't have enough rehearsal time. What I wanted to do was to make sure we all knew the text very well before we started filming. The other thing I suggested was doing very, very long takes. We were going to let the actors get themselves in the dramatic situation and let the whole thing evolve. I wasn't going to make an over-edited movie. So, that was another reason why we chose to use people with a very considerable theatrical background. Because of the rhythm of the dialogue, I would have preferred to take a more cerebral approach and to stand back more from the action. I found that in moments of high physical drama, like the various killings, the dialogue had to operate on a different sort of scale. I couldn't get that distancing effect which I'd hoped for.

The convention of the long take – some are eight minutes long – has occasionally resulted in highly literary verbiage. This gratifies and excites me, but whether it will gratify and excite a much larger and more 'public' audience I don't know. I'm also worried about the film's length. It's very long and I must get it down to a semi-commercial length, about 110 minutes [Greenaway's original cut was four hours long]. There's a lot of material which, due to pressures and exigencies, has gone missing about the details of the gardens. There are numerous pressures on the film partly because of extended budgets, commercial concerns, and so on.

I would like to think that the characters – not just Neville but also Talmann – and their dialogue, which is often near the knuckle, represent some aspects of myself. As they do in a key scene between Neville and Mrs Talmann where they talk about 'arrogance' and 'innocence'. That may be my particular problem as well, balancing the 'arrogance' with the 'innocence'. Although Neville is ostensibly a very arrogant figure, bouncing through the world and destroying all in his path out of his own self-centredness, it's through his innocence that he gets involved in other people's plots. Because, if he was a wiser man, he would have seen these machinations a mile off. But his innocence opens him up, makes him vulnerable.

All the strength of image and plot and feeling in *The Draughtsman's Contract* is pretty universal. It just happens to be put in this particular format. I want to make a good movie which has got punch, visual excitement and cerebral entertainment.

Peter Greenaway, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, November 1982