



CHANTAL AKERMAN: ADVENTURES IN PERCEPTION

Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

Les Rendez-vous d'Anna (Meetings with Anna)

Director: Chantal Akerman

Production Companies: Hélène Films, Unité 3,

Paradise Films, ZDF - Zweites Deutsches

Fernsehen

Producer: Alain Dahan

Production Managers: Catherine Huhardeaux,

Evelyne Paul

Production Supervisors: Philippe Allaire,

Jean-Marie Vervisch, Stéphane Rossie

Assistant Directors: Romain Coupil, Marilyn Watelet

Screenplay: Chantal Akerman

Director of Photography: Jean Penzer

Camera Operator: Michel Houssiau

Editor: Francine Sandberg

Art Directors: Philippe Graaf,

André Fonteyne Coyotte

Make-up: Christiane Sauvage

Sound Recording: Henri Morelle

Sound Re-recording: Jean-Paul Loublrier

Sound Editor: Suzanne Sandberg,

Pierre-Louis LeCoeur

Sound Effects: Jacky Dufour

Subtitles: Cinétitres

Cast:

Aurora Clément (*Anna Silver*)

Helmut Griem (*Heinrich*)

Magali Noël (*Ida*)

Lea Massari (*Anna's mother*)

Hanns Zischler (*Hans*)

Jean-Pierre Cassel (*Daniel*)

Alain Berenboom

Laurent Taffein

Françoise Bonet

Victor Verek

Thaddausz Kahl

France-Belgium-West Germany 1978

127 mins

Digital 4K (restoration)

The screening on Fri 7 Feb will be presented with additional Descriptive Subtitles of non-dialogue audio

The screening on Fri 21 Feb will include an introduction

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With *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna*, her most accessible and 'commercial' film to date, Chantal Akerman will presumably reach a much wider public than hitherto (the film was the success of the 1978 Paris Festival) while remaining faithful to her earlier preoccupations and methods. Marginal on three accounts – she is young, female and Belgian – she has managed to make marginality the centre of a film which looks sufficiently expensive to qualify as mainstream even if the issues it raises are not often encountered in the European art cinema.

Les Rendez-vous d'Anna is easy to watch and easy to follow. Its linear narrative and movement through time respect fictional conventions (unlike the 'real time' of *Jeanne Dielman*), without flashbacks, digressions or dislocations (unlike *News from Home*). The viewer could scarcely be 'lost' when the topographical signals, principally the names of railway stations, are not merely a logical part of the fiction but are almost obsessively overdetermined: Bruxelles Nord; Bruxelles Centre; Bruxelles Midi ... The film very clearly distinguishes between the public nomenclature of stations and hotels (and even cinemas) and the rare moments of private anonymity and obscurity, the 'home' which all the players are reluctant to enter unless confident that their refuge will not be violated.

This has been mistakenly described as a journey 'across Northern Europe'. The journey is actually South-west (Cologne to Brussels) and then South-east (Brussels to Paris), a journey, so to speak, into the ethical light: from the barbarian outposts to the hub of Latin civilisation, the filmmakers' Mecca; from the Teutonic periphery to the Parisian centre. An inevitable autobiographical resonance (Chantal Akerman moved to Paris, and was extremely influenced by cinema there) points up the way this reflection on the course of European history is assimilated with a purely personal trajectory. Only when Anna reaches the Parisian metropolis does she assume the conventional female role of mistress and nurse, momentarily suspending her professional persona to go in search of drugs to ease Daniel's existential despair. The sense of belonging, of ceasing to be a displaced person, is therefore achieved at the cost of a certain subordination.

It is no accident that the drama of the diaspora and the persecution of the Jews is as much a sub-text as feminism, or that the woman filmmaker is condemned to wander. Consequently, until she reaches Paris, all Anna's 'meetings' are with individuals as displaced and marginal as herself – 'decentred' characters who hold the centre of the stage, and most frequently the frame. Much of the film is shot in the so-called 'minimalist' style: a camera which does not move, sources of sound which do not appear in frame (particularly conversations), dislocation of sound and image, and so on. In addition, Anna herself more often listens than speaks, walks away from the camera rather than towards it, appears to be no more the subject of the film than the localities she passes through.

A romantic reading of *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna* would point to the difficulties of the creative artist (especially if a woman), the constant effort to gain recognition and develop a market for what one has produced. But an aesthetic reading would arrive at a rather different interpretation: Chantal Akerman is clearly poised for a new departure; she has stretched her subject matter as far as it will go, unless inevitably bigger budgets will tempt her into narrative conventions and psychological analysis. *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna* is a *summa* of minimalism: what comes next will be fascinating.

Jill Forbes, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, July 1980

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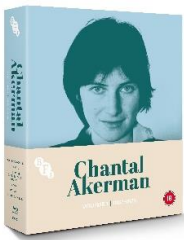
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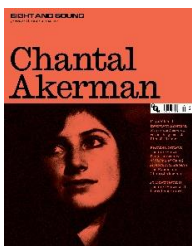
**Chantal Akerman Collection Vol.1: 1967-1978
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Spanning the period 1967 to 1978, and representing the first significant release of Chantal Akerman's work in the UK, this 5-Blu-ray set includes her most famous film, *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*. Available from BFI Shop from 24 February.



**Sight and Sound presents the auteurs series:
Chantal Akerman**

Revisiting material from the *Sight and Sound* and *Monthly Film Bulletin* archive and also publishing exclusive texts and images from the Fondation Chantal Akerman archive, *Sight and Sound* presents the auteurs series: *Chantal Akerman*. Available now from BFI Shop.



Chantal Akerman on 'Les Rendez-vous d'Anna'

The film rests on a journey. What kind of journey? And why across Northern Europe?

Anna's travels around Northern Europe don't constitute a romantic journey, and neither do they have anything to do with growth or discovery. Nor with the kind of journey where the traveller tries to demarcate his territory anew, as in certain contemporary German films.

She travels as an exile, as a nomad who owns nothing of the space she passes through. Who has no power over either the space or the people she encounters. It's her job that makes her travel, but you can almost say that exile is her vocation. She has left her homeland to live in Paris ... but she seems no more rooted there than anywhere else. The apartment she lives in is more a place she passes through than an occupied territory.

And it's as an exile that she crosses part of Europe. Europe which has for a long time been a model of civilization. The centre of perception and imitation... A civilization which has posited itself as the only good one, therefore completely totalitarian, wanting to cancel out the difference of others and thus endanger their very existence ... Europe's 'advanced' civilization facing 'developing' countries. Yet capable of the greatest barbarity (1940/45 war, genocide, Algerian war, torture, white torture, etc.).

Germany, the country in Europe where capitalism is the most advanced. Itself a 'model of liberal democracy' for its neighbours...

We often talk about German happiness.

Belgium is the obligatory journey from Anna from the Ruhr to Paris. A place of tension between Germany and France. A country crossed by different cultures, Flemish, French, Germanic, which mutually deny each other. Land of plenty? as the man on the train said to Anna.

And France, country of freedom?

We say as much, Anna answers.

She only passes through as a nomad; she is available to welcome the words of others in their differences, this is undoubtedly why the people she meets confide in her.

The people Anna meet seem lost, in complete disarray ... it would seem their dismay is linked to the crisis in Europe, a crisis not only economic, but also of moral and political values. A crisis of civilization. A time of transition perhaps?

The people Anna meet are all on the edge of something ... they are still clinging on a little to this edge. It wouldn't take much for them to tip over. They are vaguely aware that the values on which they have built their lives are trembling ... They seem to be just waking up to the scandal of their own situation, of their own history.

Production notes