

Éric  
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on 3+3

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A film that has been very important to me is Masao Adachi's *AKA Serial Killer* from 1969. I have shown it before, so instead of screening it again, I wanted to explore similar ground in new ways with this 3+3 programme. Adachi's film started as a scouting trip for a movie about a Japanese serial killer. But halfway through, he realised the scouting footage was the film: a portrait of the killer through the landscapes he lived in.

Chantal Akerman's *Sud* (1999) had a similar genesis. After returning from a trip to the US, Chantal asked her editor, Claire Atherton, to take a look at some scouting footage. Six weeks later, they had cut a movie about Chantal's journey in the South, the racist murder of James Byrd Jr., and, more broadly, America's brutal history as it is inscribed in physical and mental landscapes.

The idea of remaking Adachi's landscape film had been on my mind for some time. After the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, I started working on *Also Known As Jihadi* (2017), a film about a young French man who had joined the Islamic State in Syria, and faced terrorism charges upon his return to France. Rather than focus on his guilt or motives, I filmed landscapes of the places where he lived to question what they might reveal about his choices, and the social and political structures that we may discern within these geographies. His incomplete story is also told through a parallel narrative made up of judicial documents and police reports.

I usually work on several films at once. While editing *Also Known As Jihadi* (my first collaboration with Claire Atherton), I began working with 23 middle-school students in St Denis, a disenfranchised suburb north of Paris. The film was an open-ended public commission for the opening of a new school. We worked without a script, asking questions instead. 'What's the difference between sound and noise?' 'Is this a fiction or a documentary we are making together?' We didn't find all the answers, but four years later, in 2019, we released *Un Film Dramatique*.

My filmmaking is closely tied to working with two Claires. Claire Atherton edited the three films of mine in this program, and Claire Mathon was their director of photography. In 2019, without much of a plan, I took Mathon to film long tracking shots of workers handling flowers in the world's largest flower market. It's a dizzying place where 46 million flowers are bought and sold every morning at auction. A year later, I had the idea of combining these observational images with a beautiful one-act play by Luigi Pirandello about a man with a flower-shaped tumour in his mouth, who observes the world with the keen eye of a man facing imminent death. *A Flower in the Mouth* (2022) is a diptych about time running out and how to live through the days that remain.

While showing an early cut of *A Flower in the Mouth* to a friend, I mentioned that Louis Malle's film *My Dinner with Andre* (1981) had been important in rehearsing the Pirandello text with Oxmo Puccino, the actor who plays the protagonist. My friend told me about another Louis Malle film that resonates with the flower market sequence: *Human, All Too Human* (1974), shot in a Citroën car manufacturing plant and at a car sales fair in beautiful tracking shots. It is a remarkable film about the conditions of industrial labour and consumption and, for me, a lesson in simplicity in the relationship between filmmaking and the real. When the film was released, it faced criticism from some on the left who felt that the absence of voice-over commentary failed to explain the true predicament of workers in the automobile

industry. Today, I am interested in screening it to see what these images without explanation tell us 50 years on.

Some films make you want to make films. Jia Zhangke's *The World* (2004) reduces cosmopolitan landscapes into miniature formats where theme park employees labour, love, escape solitude, and travel the globe without ever leaving Beijing. I wanted to share it because I have a vivid memory of watching it in 2004. After the screening, I wandered around Paris for most of the night and secretly decided I wanted to make films. Everything I like about cinema is in *The World*.