

Mongrel Media

Presents

THE MILL AND THE CROSS



An Lech Majewski Film
92 min., Poland, Sweden, 2011
Languages: English

www.themillandthecross.com

Inspired by the book THE MILL AND THE CROSS
by Michael Francis Gibson

Distribution

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Musée du Louvre, Paris

INTRODUCTION

In 2005, the writer and art critic Michael Francis Gibson saw Lech Majewski's *Angelus* in a cinema in Paris. Fascinated by the director's painterly vision, he gave him a copy of his book *The Mill and the Cross*, an analysis of Pieter Bruegel's painting *The Way to Calvary*. Majewski, whose creative journey began with painting and poetry, admired the depth of Gibson's insight into Bruegel's picture, so he took up the challenge of creating a visual equivalent of the Flemish master's work.

For Lech Majewski this challenge was not an entirely new one, as he had already based several of his films on paintings and painters. It was he who wrote the original screenplay for *Basquiat* and found Julian Schnabel to direct it; his film *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, with Bosch's famous painting as a background, was hailed by Sight & Sound as a masterpiece; his unique videoart pieces were displayed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Venice Biennale.

It took Majewski three years to complete the film. It was work that required patience and imagination as well as the use of new CG technology and 3D effects; three years spent weaving an enormous digital tapestry composed of layer upon layer of perspective, atmospheric phenomena and people.

SYNOPSIS

Pieter Bruegel's epic masterpiece *The Way To Calvary* depicts the story of Christ's Passion set in Flanders under brutal Spanish occupation in the year 1564, the very year Bruegel created the painting. From among the more than five hundred figures that fill Bruegel's remarkable canvas, *THE MILL & THE CROSS* focuses on a dozen characters whose life stories unfold and intertwine in a panoramic landscape populated by villagers and red-caped horsemen. Among them are Bruegel himself (played by Rutger Hauer), his friend and art collector Nicholas Jonghelinck (Michael York), and the Virgin Mary (Charlotte Rampling).

The first part of the film shows a young man who goes with his wife to sell a calf at a market. Unexpectedly, he is picked by the Spanish militia, severely beaten and hanged on a wheel - "wheelified." The incident comes quite out of the blue, but why? - the mind starts to ask questions. Yet how many young men are taken from the streets, beaten and often killed in oppressed countries even today?



THE MILL & THE CROSS invites the audience to reconstruct from Bruegel's preparatory drawings the deeper meaning of scenes. Following the painter's hints sketched on paper, the viewer pieces together an epic story of courage, defiance and sacrifice, and, like a detective on a path of clues, succeeds in reading the hidden language of symbols.

The film encompasses a space of cultural, religious and philosophical themes, yet it communicates on a simple level of the language of the heart. Everybody is familiar with the scenes from the Crucifixion, but surprise comes from juxtaposing them with domestic chores and tortures of anonymous heretics. We witness a religious oxymoron: The crucifixion of a man while the torturers show him the Crucifix. What a perversion: Copying the torture of Christ, hangmen are doing it in the very name of Christ. And this religious paradox is repeated over and over throughout the history of humankind.

There is a strange symmetry between the two young men victimised in the film - the "wheelified" and the crucified: one's death is anonymous, the other's is famous. Is it a privilege to be tortured like Christ? The story seems to be subversive, like the painting of Pieter Bruegel itself. Is it religious or anti-religious? Is it for or against the Church? Neither, since it tries to dig deeper: What kind of a law is usurped by some to punish others in the name of different understanding and interpretations of the abstract ideas of God? Unfortunately, the sad answer is: Any law in the name of which one can enslave and abuse others. The ideas of Truth, Justice and Beauty can be easily turned into the instruments of torture.

Bruegel was, and still is, the wisest philosopher among the painters. In most of his works he took pains to hide the obvious by planting distractions somewhere else. The hidden should be palpable - that was his stratagem for showing the quintessence of suffering. Namely, that nobody cares about it. The sufferer is left alone, abandoned, forgotten... The others have to live their lives and somehow make the most out of it.

There are other themes in *THE MILL & THE CROSS* as well: That only an artist can stop time, capture the moment and immortalise it. Or that the elements that build a single image hanging in a museum can be plentiful... But nothing is more important than that the hidden is the essence of Truth.

One of Poland's most adventurous and inspired artists and filmmakers, Lech Majewski, translates *The Way to Calvary* into cinema, inviting the viewer to live inside the aesthetic universe of the painting as we watch it being created. As various lives evolve within the film frame, we witness Bruegel capturing shards of their desperate stories on his canvas-in-the-making.

Confronting the Spanish inquisition bloodily repressing the rise of Protestant reform in the Low Countries, the film offers a vibrant meditation on art and religion as ongoing, layered processes of collective storytelling and reinterpretation. *THE MILL & THE CROSS* is also a feast of stunning visual effects, a provocative allegory and a cinematic *tour de force* on religious freedom and human rights.

THE MAKING OF THE FILM

With his latest feature *THE MILL & THE CROSS*, director Lech Majewski changes the way art is portrayed on film, pioneering a new method to “enter” a painting and to create a narrative based on its depicted figures, performed by live actors.

Majewski's method consists of combining digitally shot footage in three different ways:

- actors shot in front of a blue screen, which is integrated later with various backdrops
- actors and footage shot on location in Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria and New Zealand on specifically chosen landscapes resembling those found in Bruegel's paintings
- a large 2D backdrop of Bruegel's work painted on canvas by Majewski

In post-production, Majewski and his editor painstakingly layered these various elements. For example, he added an actor shot in front of a blue screen to several layers of both painted backdrops and location footage, enhanced by digital footage of a majestic sky shot in New Zealand. This process allowed the filmmaker to act as a painter himself.

IN THE PRESS

From ARTnews, October 2010:

“Majewski’s film is a far cry from such melodramatic movie renderings of artists and their lives as *Lust for Life* or *Moulin Rouge*. Rather than telling the story through the framework of an artist’s personal trials and tribulations, Majewski focuses on how Bruegel made the painting, showing the artist sketching, discussing his work, and scouting locations. We also see many of the characters whom Bruegel painted as they get caught up in both the drama of the crucifixion and the stark realities of life under the Spanish Inquisition. **‘I want the viewer to live inside the painting,’** Majewski says about his film, adding that he wants us to meet the people in the picture ‘as they are painted.’” (Steve Barnes)

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



In 2006, the Museum of Modern Art in New York honored Lech Majewski with a major retrospective of his works, entitled "Lech Majewski: Conjuring the Moving Image." Curated by Laurence Kardish, the retrospective presented Majewski's films and video features. The world premiere of a unique sequel of thirty-three videoart pieces was the highlight of the opening night at MoMA. Exhibited later by many galleries and museums, *Blood of a Poet* was installed at the Berlinale in February, 2007, and in June became a part of the 52nd Venice Biennale, where it was shown in two locations: as the non-stop projection on Campo San Pantalon, and on multiple screens inside the Giudecca's Teatro Junghans. New York Times critic Jeannette Catsoulis wrote: "Lech Majewski creates an aesthetic of dysfunction that's as beautiful as it is disturbing. After a while the film's expressiveness becomes so hypnotic that it's difficult not to make your own connections."

In 2007, the Lech Majewski Retrospective that originated at MoMA, traveled to the Art Institute of Chicago, Portland Art Museum, Cleveland's Wexner Arts Center, SIFF Seattle, UCLA Film Archive, Berkeley Art Museum; and the National Gallery in Washington DC. The Washington Post's Philip Kennicott wrote: "Majewski is a brilliant filmmaker whose haunting aesthetic is processed through a lively mind and idiosyncratic imagination, chastened and tempered by history, and captured on screen with the rigor and perfectionism of an artist who might also carve castles out of toothpicks. Throughout his films, the great categories of our existence - the public and private, the personal and political, the natural world and the man-made one - constantly dissolve into one another."

In 2005, two major retrospectives of Mr. Majewski's works were organized in Buenos Aires/Mar del Plata and in London, where the British Film Academy, Riverside Studios and Curzon Cinemas showed his films, while the Whitechapel Art Gallery showed his video art pieces. A year earlier he assembled a collection of visual poems entitled *Divinities* and published his fifth novel.

2002 saw a number of Mr. Majewski's works appear. The Lithuanian National Opera staged his new version of *Carmen*, while theatergoers in Germany could see his production of *The Three Penny Opera* as well as *Tramway* performed in Düsseldorf. He also published his fourth novel, on which he based his film *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, an Anglo-Italian production shot in Venice and London. Completed in 2004, it won the Grand Prix at the Rome International Film Festival. "There is magic in *The Garden of Earthly Delights'* intimate passion plays," wrote R. Emmet Sweeney in *The Village Voice*. "Each moment becomes achingly gorgeous." "This film puts to shame most other love stories in its honesty," wrote *The Washington Post*; "within a very philosophical framework, Majewski manages to tell an astonishingly human story: the staggering weirdness of being human - frail, material, dependent, and filled with ideas and aspirations that transcend everything. *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is among the most powerful films made in years."

In 2000, Majewski began filming *Angelus*, an epic about Silesian coalminers living in an occult commune. "There's a purified aura of beauty in *Angelus* that creates a sometimes stunning sense of the imagination overcoming all obstacles," wrote Robert Koehler in *Variety*; "the film's mode of setting up fantastically designed and lensed tableaux shots, has a nearly hallucinating impact on the eye." *Angelus* won a number of prizes, including a Fellini Award and Grand Prix at Camerimage. In the same year it was presented at Venice's Palagraziussi (in collaboration with the Venice Biennale), and in 2002 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume in Paris.

In 1999, Majewski directed the feature film *Wojacek*, which was shown at a number of festivals, including Rotterdam, Berlin, Jerusalem, Rio de Janeiro, London, Mexico City, New York, Montreal and Los Angeles. The film received over twenty prizes, among them the European Award at the Festival of European Cinema in Corato, Italy; a V Forum of European Cinema Award in Strasbourg; and in Barcelona where the International Federation of Film Societies chose it as the Best Independent Film of the Year 2000, giving it a prestigious Don

Quixote Award. The amateur Krzysztof Siwczyk, who played the lead, was nominated by the European Film Academy as the Best European Actor. "Superb and surprisingly witty," Michael Phillips wrote in Chicago Tribune: "*Wojacek* operates on a deadpan comic tone established by its achingly beautiful sense of visual composure. Excellent!"

In 1997, Mr. Majewski staged and filmed in Germany his own version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream*. A year later, he produced a series of CD's featuring Polish modern music masters, notably Henryk Mikołaj Górecki. In the same year he staged the experimental *TRAMWAY a 90 kilometer performance*, and built an installation in the Modern Art Gallery of his native town of Katowice. A video based on this exhibition won a Silver Award at the 32nd Houston International Film Festival.

In 1996, he debuted as a composer (together with Józef Skrzek) and a librettist, writing his autobiographical opera *The Roe's Room*. It premiered at the Silesian Opera and was awarded a Golden Mask. Polygram Records also brought it out as a double CD. Subsequently, the International Theater Institute (ITI) selected this production from over five hundred entries as one of the dozen best new operas in the world, and in 1998 presented it in Düsseldorf. In the same year, based on his opera, Mr. Majewski made a videoart feature *The Roe's Room*, described as "absolutely singular 'autobiographical film opera'... Limpidly beautiful 'cycle of life' parable... One of a kind !" (Time Out London); "Ravaging intensity!" (The Washington Post); and "a strange, entrancing beauty that possess a memorable, haunting quality" (Variety).

In 1995 Lech Majewski co-produced *Basquiat*, a film based on the story he wrote, starring Jeffrey Wright, Benicio del Toro, Willem Dafoe, Gary Oldman, Courtney Love, Dennis Hopper, and David Bowie as Andy Warhol. In the same year he directed in Heilbronn, Germany *The Black Rider*. His version of this postmodernist opera by Bob Wilson, Tom Waits and William Burroughs won him the "Killianpreis" for best direction and was praised by German critics as "true mastery" (Stuttgarter Zeitung), "a magnificent, hypnotic spectacle" (Stimme), "a breathtaking journey into the unknown" (Rundblick).

In September of 1995, the Polish National Opera opened the new season with his production of Bizet's *Carmen*, transmitted live by Canal+. The prestigious magazine Opera International cited this staging among the best of 1995 opera productions in the world. His staging of Penderecki's *Ubu Rex* in 1993 first brought Mr. Majewski to the opera world and earned him several awards including a Golden Mask for the best production and Golden Orpheus at the 1994 Warsaw Autumn Festival.

In 1992, together with David Lynch's Propaganda Films, he produced and directed *Gospel According To Harry*, which Piers Handling of the Toronto Film Festival called "a visionary film poem." Viggo Mortensen debuted in the lead role.

In 1986, Mr. Majewski went to Rio de Janeiro to develop a screenplay with the "world's most wanted man," Ronald Biggs, one of the perpetrators of England's Great Train Robbery. *Prisoner of Rio* (1989) was completed at Pinewood Studios and released worldwide by Columbia Pictures-TriStar. Mr. Majewski acted both as the Director and Executive Producer of the film, raising all of the financing.

In 1982, on the River Thames, he staged Homer's *Odyssey*, receiving much attention and acclaim. The London Times hailed it as "potent theatre." He has published several books of poetry, essays and fiction. Based on his first novel, he wrote a screenplay for his US debut *Flight of the Spruce Goose* (1985). It was produced by Michael Hausman, who was also behind such films as Milos Forman's *Amadeus* and David Mamet's *House of Games*.

While still in Poland, Mr. Majewski wrote and directed two feature films: *Annunciation* (1978) and *The Knight* (1980), which Janet Maslin described in the New York Times as "a haunting, austere parable directed with assurance... His film retains its spare, arresting visual style throughout," and by Kevin Thomas in the Los Angeles Times as "beautiful and mystical."

LECH MAJEWSKI FILMOGRAPHY

- **THE MILL & THE CROSS** (Angelus Silesius, 2010)
writer/director/producer/cinematographer/editor/composer
 - **GLASS LIPS** (Angelus Silesius, 2007)
writer/director/producer/cinematographer/editor/composer
 - **THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS** (Mestiere Cinema - Metaphysics Ltd, 2004)
writer/director/producer/cinematographer/editor/composer
 - **ANGELUS** (Filmcontract, 2000) writer/director/set designer/composer/editor
 - **WOJACZEK** (Filmcontract, 1999) writer/director/editor
 - **BASQUIAT** (Miramax, 1996) writer/producer
 - **GOSPEL ACCORDING TO HARRY** (Propaganda Films, 1992)
writer/director/producer
 - **PRISONER OF RIO** (Columbia TriStar, 1988) writer/director/producer
 - **FLIGHT OF THE SPRUCE GOOSE** (SGF - USA, 1986) writer/director/producer
-

ABOUT THE CO-SCREENWRITER

- **Michael Francis Gibson**

A writer, art historian, art critic and scholar, Michael Francis Gibson maintained a regular column on art in the International Herald Tribune for over thirty years. His articles have also been published in the New York Times, Art in America, ARTnews, Connaissance des Arts and other publications, and he has devoted numerous radio programs (Radio-Canada, France-Culture) to artistic, cultural and philosophical issues.

Gibson has devoted monographs to Pieter Bruegel, Symbolist art, Dada, Marcel Duchamp, Paul Gauguin and Odilon Redon, and published an in-depth study of Breugel's painting *Way to Calvary* entitled *The Mill and the Cross*, which provided the inspiration for Lech Majewski's film of the same name. Gibson has also published a study in the field of cultural anthropology (in French, *Ces lois inconnues*) and the first two volumes of a fantasy trilogy (in English, *Chronicles of the Greater Dream*) published under the pseudonym of Miguel Errazu. Gibson co-authored the script of THE MILL & THE CROSS with Lech Majewski.



ABOUT THE ACTORS

- **Rutger Hauer (Pieter Bruegel)**



Rutger Hauer's acting career began in 1969 with the title role in the Dutch television series *Floris*, directed by Paul Verhoeven. Hauer's film career was launched in 1973 when Verhoeven cast him as the lead in the box office success *Turkish Delight*, and within two years its star was invited to make his English-language debut opposite Michael Caine and Sydney Poitier in the British apartheid drama *The Wilby Conspiracy* (1975). After several years making films in the Netherlands, Hauer made his American debut in the Sylvester Stallone film *Nighthawks* (1981), cast as a psychopathic terrorist named "Wulfgar." The following year, he appeared in what is his best-known role as the violent yet sympathetic replicant Roy Batty in Ridley Scott's 1982 sci-fi thriller, *Blade Runner*.

He went on to play the adventurer courting Gene Hackman's daughter (Theresa Russell) in Nicolas Roeg's *Eureka* (1983); the investigative reporter opposite John Hurt in Sam Peckinpah's *The Osterman Weekend* (1983); the hardened Landsknecht mercenary Martin in *Flesh & Blood* (1985); the knight paired with Michelle Pfeiffer in the Medieval romance *Ladyhawke* (1985); and the mysterious hitchhiker in *The Hitcher* (1986).

Italian director Ermanno Olmi mined the gentler side of Hauer's personality in *The Legend of the Holy Drinker* (1989), the story of a lost soul who dies of drink in Paris while attempting to pay a debt of honor in a church. That same year Phillip Noyce cast him in the martial arts action adventure *Blind Fury* (1989). Hauer returned to science fiction opposite Joan Chen with *Salute of the Jugger* (1990), in which he played a former champion in a post-apocalyptic world. He and Chen would work together again in two more science fiction films, *Wedlock* and *Precious Find*.

By the 1990s, Hauer was as well known for his humorous appearances in Guinness commercials as for his many screen roles. He also acted in several British and American television productions, including *Inside the Third Reich* (as Albert Speer); *Escape from Sobibor*; *Fatherland*; *Hostile Waters*; *Merlin*; *The 10th Kingdom*; *Smallville*; *Alias*; and *Salem's Lot*.

Always excelling in villainous roles, Hauer played an assassin in *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind* (2003), a villainous cardinal with influential power in *Sin City* (2005) and a devious corporate executive running Wayne Enterprises in *Batman Begins* (2005).

In 2009, he starred in the critically acclaimed *Dazzle*, by Dutch avant-garde filmmaker Cyrus Frisch, and in the title role of *Barbarossa*, an Italian film directed by Renzo Martinelli. In April 2010 he was cast as a homeless vigilante in Jason Eisener's live action adaptation of the *Grindhouse* fake trailer *Hobo With a Shotgun*.

- **Charlotte Rampling (Mary)**



Charlotte Rampling has spent four decades acting in English-language as well as French and Italian cinema. Her first screen appearance was uncredited as a water skier in Richard Lester's film *The Knack... and How to Get It* in 1965, which was followed a year later by the role of Meredith in the film *Georgy Girl*. After this, her acting career blossomed in both English and French cinema.

Later in the '60s, Rampling took on two controversial roles that helped establish her as an actress of rare daring. In 1974's *The Night Porter*, directed by Liliana Cavani, she portrayed a former concentration camp inmate entangled in a sado-masochistic relationship with her former guard, played by Dirk Bogarde. In 1969, in Luchino Visconti's *The Damned*, she played a young wife sent to a concentration camp.

She gained recognition from American audiences in a remake of Raymond Chandler's detective story *Farewell, My Lovely* (1975) and later with Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories* (1980) and Sidney Lumet's *The Verdict* (1982), starring Paul Newman.

In the 2000s, Rampling received strong critical acclaim in two films by French director François Ozon: the poignant drama *Under the Sand* (2000) and the erotic thriller *Swimming Pool* (2003). In 2004, French filmmaker Laurent Cantet cast her as the lead in *Heading South*, his controversial Haiti-set film about female sexual tourism.

The actress has continued to work in sexually provocative films such as *Basic Instinct* 2006 sequel starring Sharon Stone. More recently, she portrayed the mother of Keira Knightley's character in the title role in 2008's *The Duchess*.

Rampling's most recent film credits include Todd Solondz's *Life During Wartime* and Mark Romanek's dark drama *Never Let Me Go*, both released in 2010. She will soon be seen in Lars von Trier's disaster drama *Melancholia*.

- **Michael York (Nicholas Jonghelinck)**



British actor Michael York began his illustrious 46-year career with the National Youth Theatre, where he played Shakespeare in London and Europe, and went on to perform extensively at Oxford University. He joined Laurence Olivier's new National Theatre Company in 1965 and a year later made his film debut in Franco Zeffirelli's *The Taming of the Shrew* with Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. He was also Tybalt in Zeffirelli's acclaimed *Romeo and Juliet* (1968). He also starred in an early Merchant Ivory Productions film, *The Guru* (1969). He played an amoral drifter in Harold Prince's *Something for Everyone* (1970) opposite Angela Lansbury. He then went on to portray the bisexual Brian Roberts in Bob Fosse's film version of *Cabaret* (1972), opposite Liza Minnelli. In 1977 he reunited with Zeffirelli as a fiery John the Baptist in *Jesus of Nazareth*.

York starred as D'Artagnan in the 1973 adaptation of *The Three Musketeers* and he made his Broadway debut in the original production of Tennessee Williams's *Out Cry*. One year later the sequel to *The Three Musketeers* was released titled *The Four Musketeers*. Fifteen years later, most of the cast (and crew) joined together in a third film titled *The Return of the Musketeers*. York had already been on British TV as Jolyon (Jolly) in *The Forsyte Saga* (1967). He also played the title character in the film adaptation of *Logan's Run* (1976).

Since his auspicious early work, York has enjoyed a busy and varied career in film, television, and on the stage. His more than 60 other screen credits include memorable roles in such films as Joseph Losey's *Accident*, the all-star *Murder on the Orient Express*, *The Last Remake of Beau Geste*, and opposite Burt Lancaster in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. He even played himself in Billy Wilder's *Fedora*. He was in all three Austin Powers movies and in both Omega Code films.

His television work comprises over 80 credits, including *Great Expectations*, *Space*, *The Heat of the Day*, *A Knight in Camelot*, *The Night of the Fox*, and *The Lot* (Emmy nomination). Recently in Larry David's *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, he was also a guest character in *The Simpsons* and in the 100th episode of *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*.

York's Broadway and regional theater credits include *Bent*, *The Crucible*, *Ring Round the Moon*, and the title role in *Cyrano de Bergerac*. He was in the musical of *The Little Prince* and recently toured the US in *Camelot*, playing King Arthur.

York's distinctive voice can be heard in more than 90 audio book and film narrations as varied as *The Book of Psalms*, *Memories*, *Dreams*, *Reflections*, *The Vampire Lestat*, and his own children's book, *The Magic Paw Paw*. Grammy-nominated for *Treasure Island*, he won awards for *The Fencing Master*, *Creating True Peace*, *Goodbye to Berlin*, and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

REVIEWS:

Variety, 11-01-27, by Dennis Harvey

An extraordinary imaginative leap, Lech Majewski's "The Mill and the Cross" combines old and new technologies allowing the viewer to live inside the painting -- Flemish master Pieter Bruegel's 1564 "The Procession to Calvary," an epic canvas depicting both Christ's crucifixion and the artist's homeland brutalization by Spanish occupiers.

Neither conventional costume drama nor abstract objet d'art, this visually ravishing, surprisingly beguiling gamble won't fit any standard arthouse niche. Still it could prove the Polish helmer's belated international breakthrough, especially if marketed as a unique, immersive museum-meets-cinema experience a la Alexander Sokurov's "Russian Ark."

Opening setpiece stages the complex painting via a combination of live actors (and horses), bluescreen effects and 2D backdrops. Its crowded landscape features some 500 historical, religious, contemporary and symbolic figures, with biblical travails depicted alongside sufferings of Flemish citizens persecuted by representatives of the Spanish inquisition. We continually revisit this tableau, in whole and part, while other scenes are frequently modeled on several other paintings by Bruegel the Elder.

Representing God atop an enormous windmill tower is a miller (Marian Makula) impassively regarding various scenes from his lofty perch. They include the seizure by red-coated militia of one peasant (Mateusz Machnik) who is tortured and killed for presumed heresy. Later, another hapless soul is literally crucified for some other crime.

Periodically commenting sorrowfully on this state of affairs -- either alone or in conversation with the artist -- is a wealthy burgher (Michael York) appalled by the invaders' misrule, even if he himself seems immune from harm. A mother (Charlotte Rampling) whose son has been dragged off to slaughter delivers in voiceover lamentations that are more personal and poetic; she is also the painting's Virgin Mary model. Meanwhile, Breughel himself (Rutger Hauer) bemusedly explains the hidden meanings scattered throughout his masterwork, often in the form of conflated religious allegory and political protest.

Not everything is grim here, however. Indeed much of "The Mill and the Cross" delights, with episodes of rambunctious humor among some rural ne'er-do-wells and a roving pack of joyfully rowdy children. Life does go on, despite the climate of fear and cruelty.

While hardly an exercise in strict realism a la "The Girl With the Pearl Earring," the pic details rustic Flanders life with loving care, from costuming to simple machinery. Pic's narrative content (inspired by co-scenarist Michael Francis Gibson's nonfiction tome of the same name, which playfully analyzes both painting and its creation) is hardly straightforward or propulsive.

Yet the film is never dull, and frequently entrancing.

Lensing wrapped nearly a year and a half ago, followed by lengthy post-production labor resulting in the remarkable mesh of visual elements that recreate Breughel's art and times.

While not intended to be seamless, design contributions are superlative. Sparingly used music hews mostly to instruments of the era. The three international marquee thespians speak in English; all incidental speech, in Spanish and Flemish, goes untranslated.

Indie Wire, 11-01-27, by Christopher Campbell

[...] More than a mere artist biopic, it concentrates on the single work and brings it to life, as part tableau vivant, with actors and some beautiful CG matte work.

[...] Documented is the key word, because I occasionally thought of the film as an all-reenactment documentary of "life in a day" in Flanders in the 16th century.

[...] Some of the scenes look familiar, as though inspired by other Flemish and Dutch paintings of the era and later. I thought as much of the shadowy post-Renaissance works as the relatively bright and cartoony work of Bruegel, which may have been intended since the film does take place at a transitional time artistically. Regardless, I was engrossed with every shot, traveling through the mise-en-scene as thoroughly as I would a still artwork.

[...] Are you a fan of Akira Kurosawa's "Dreams," Julie Taymor's "Frida," Jan Svankmajer's "Lunacy" Peter Webber's "Girl with a Pearl Earring" and the general work of Peter Greenaway (as well as anything else incorporating a sort of tableau vivant that I'm forgetting)? Then see "The Mill and the Cross."

The Oregonian, 11-01-27, by Shawn Levy

[...] The film, starring Rutger Hauer as Bruegel, Michael York as his patron and Charlotte Rampling as the model whom the painter used for his depiction of the Virgin Mary, is moody and dense, employing digital effects and tableaux vivants to give a sense of how Bruegel used contemporary clothes, figures and mores to render a vision of the death of Jesus.

It superficially resembles Peter Greenaway's muddled "Nightwatching," which attempted something similar with a famed Rembrandt painting. But it's a livelier, more humane and more colorful film (in texture, it recalled Vincent Ward's visionary "What Dreams May Come").

It's not a film to every taste -- it's slow and detailed and quiet in the way of many European art movies. But it's clearly the work of someone with immense command of his craft and his material.

CREDITS

Director, producer	Lech Majewski
Screenplay	Michael Francis Gibson, Lech Majewski <i>Inspired by the book THE MILL AND THE CROSS by Michael Francis Gibson</i>
Executive producer	Angelus Silesius
Co-producer	Freddy Olsson
Line producers	Małgorzata Domin, Piotr Ledwig
Film co-financed by	Polish Film Institute, Agnieszka Odorowicz
Co-producers	Telewizja Polska, Bokomotiv Filmproduktion AB, Odeon Studio, Silesia Film, 24 Media, Supra Film, Arkana Studio, Piramida Film
Directors of Photography	Lech Majewski, Adam Sikora
Costume Designer	Dorota Roqueplo
Production Designers	Katarzyna Sobańska, Marcel Sławiński
Makeup Designers	Dariusz Krysiak, Monika Mirowska
Music	Lech Majewski, Józef Skrzek
Editors	Eliot Ems, Norbert Rudzik
First Assistant Directors	Krzysztof Łukaszewicz, Dorota Lis
New Zealand Cloud Formations Photographed by	John Crisstoffels
Costume Supervisor	Ewa Kocharńska
Art Director	Stanisław Porczyk

Visual Effects	Odeon Film Studio
Visual Effects Supervisor	Paweł Tybora
3D Animation	Mariusz Skrzypczyński
Lead Compositors	Dawid Borkiewicz Waldemar Mordarski
Sound Designer	Lech Majewski
Laboratory	WFDiF Warsaw

TECHNICAL SPECS

Production: **Poland, Sweden**

Dialogue: **English**

Length: **35mm 24fr/sec 91', DCP/HDCAM 25fr/sec 25 fr/sec35mm: 1.85 (24 fps)**

Sound: **Dolby Digital SRD**

DCP; HDCAM 1080 / 23.98psf 16 x 9 Full Frame (aka 1.78) Stereo

For images and additional info.: www.themillandthecross.com

