

**STRAND
RELEASING**

presents

ADAM

A FILM BY
MARYAM TOUZANI

Starring Lubna Azabal, Nisrin Erradi

PRESS NOTES

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Cannes Film Festival: Un Certain Regard
Chicago International Film Festival
AFI Fest

Country of Origin: Morocco, France
Format: DCP / 1:1.85 / Color
Sound: Dolby 5.1 Surround
Running Time: 98 minutes
Genre: Drama
Not Rated
In Arabic with English Subtitles

National Press Contact:

Carly Hildebrant / Marcus Hu
Strand Releasing
Phone: 310.836.7500
carly@strandreleasing.com
marcus@strandreleasing.com

SYNOPSIS

Abla runs a modest local bakery from her home in Casablanca where she lives alone with her 8-year-old daughter Warda. Their routine of housework and homework is interrupted one day by a knock on the door. It is Samia, a young woman looking for a job and a roof over her head. The little girl is immediately taken with the newcomer, but her mother initially refuses to allow a pregnant stranger into their home. Gradually, however, Abla's resolve softens and Samia's arrival begins to offer all of them the prospect of a new life.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Adam is the story of two lonely souls who come to appreciate one another through confrontation, then understanding and support; two women each trapped by their own destiny, who seek refuge in flight and denial.

Samia is trapped by the child she is carrying, by this life growing inside her day after day, materializing despite her. Abla is trapped by a death that has frozen her entire existence, a shunned mourning, which has transformed her into a disembodied person. The two women are forced to face life through its most beautiful and cruelest expression. And at the heart of it all, there is birth, and motherhood. This thing that overwhelms us, transcends us, awakens our primal instincts, no matter how deeply they may have been buried. Life imposes itself, in *Adam*, just as death does, in all its mightiness...

The film was born from a real encounter, painful yet inspiring, that forever left an indelible mark on me. I knew a young woman who inspired me for the character of Samia. She landed in Tangier, fleeing her family after becoming pregnant then being left by the man who had promised to marry her. Out of fear and shame, she hadn't told any of her close friends and relatives and had hidden her pregnancy for months. Far from home, she hoped to secretly give birth to her child and give it away before returning to her village. My parents took her in when she showed up on the doorstep, although they didn't even know her. Her stay, which was supposed to last a few days, turned into several weeks, until her child was born. This Samia was gentle, introverted; she loved life. I saw her pain. I saw her buoyant and joyful disposition as well. And above all, I saw how torn she was about this child that she felt she had no choice but to abandon to go on with her life. I witnessed her deliberate refusal, at first, to love the child, whom she would not look at, touch, or accept. I saw this child gradually impose itself upon her, her maternal instinct slowly awakening, in spite of all her efforts to stifle it. I saw her love this child, against her will, love it like a mother's indefectible love, knowing that her time with him was running out. The day when she went to give him away, she wanted to show herself to be strong, and dignified. I understood her gesture and thought it was terribly brave, as I could sense the suffering that this abandonment implied for her. At the same time, deep inside, I kept hoping that she would keep it, and confront society, her parents, her family. I was most certainly quite naïve, and I probably still am. I had no idea at the time that I would carry this woman and her story within me for so many years.

I felt an urgency to write and tell this story upon becoming a mother myself. Her story came together with my own wounds, my experience with loss, the distress one can feel, the denial, the unresolved grief. Yet, there also was my joy to be a mother. This is how *Adam* began to take shape.

From the very beginning, I saw and felt everything through images. Telling the story of my character, trying to approach their own true selves as closely as possible and brining that forth, became a necessity – something essential. I chose to write a simple story because I wanted the viewers to have access to the characters' inner workings in the most straightforward way, without artifice.

For me, the story of these two women, their encounter, what they are and what they become, is at the heart of what I intend to recount. Hence the decision to keep them behind closed doors, something akin to a theater stage, with the shop window being their one opening onto the world... I also sought simplicity in the stage direction, as in the emotions that I describe, for I believe that there is a profound correlation between this pared-down approach and what I am exploring.

With Virginie Surdej, my director of photography, we aimed for simple and formal frames, that first and foremost depict the depth of the relationship between Abla and Samia, allowing time to do its work, allowing the characters to set their own rhythm when needed.

My purpose was to have my camera serve as a conveyance tool for what they are expressing, but also to observe them at times, taking a step back, soaking up their lives and their moments of interiority. I therefore alternated static frames with more agile shots – sometimes more aggressive, but also more fragile. The characters' movement, the way they move about in this central space that brings them together and sets them apart, also changes gradually itself, accompanying their own personal transformation...

On the patio, in the bedrooms, the light becomes brighter, more penetrating as ties are weaved and moods untwine. The light thus follows the characters and, just like the house, is a silent and subtle element of their inner journey.

Adam is also a film about atmospheres and sensations, in which – through images and sound – we enter the bodies of these two women, for instance through hands kneading dough filmed in a sensual manner. I wanted to enter their souls, through the slightest, most insignificant of gestures. I sought to show a detail here and there, the women inside the corporeal envelope, delving to bring their truth forth onto the screen, letting their silences speak... Silently, *Adam* also crept under my skin, evolved and grew inside me for years, nearly unbeknownst to me. Today, I feel ready to bring him to life.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Director, screenwriter and actress Maryam Touzani spent her childhood in her native Tangier before pursuing a university degree in London. 'When They Slept' (2012), her first short film, was selected by a number of prestigious international festivals and received a total of 17 awards. In 2015, her second short, 'Aya Goes to the Beach', continued on the same path and won Cairo's Audience Award among its many prizes. Together with her husband, director Nabil Ayouch, Touzani worked on the development of the script and on the set of his much-acclaimed feature 'Much Loved' (2015). She also co-wrote and appeared in a leading role in Ayouch's most recent film 'Razzia' (2017). ADAM marks Maryam Touzani's feature film directing debut.

