



62<sup>e</sup> SEMAINE  
DE LA CRITIQUE  
CANNES 2023

THE  
(EX)PERIENCE  
OF  
LOVE

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# THE (EX)PERIENCE OF LOVE

*(LE SYNDROME DES AMOURS PASSEES)*

A film by Ann Sirot and Raphaël Balboni

with Lucie Debay, Lazare Gousseau, Florence Loiret Caille,  
Nora Hamzawi, Florence Janas, Ninon Borsei, Hervé Piron

89 min - Belgium - France



## SYNOPSIS

Rémy and Sandra are unable to conceive a child as they suffer from the "Past Love Syndrome". In order to be cured, they only have one solution: they have to sleep once again with each and every one of their past lovers.

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

*The (Ex)perience of Love* is a farcical tale that questions the intricate interlocking of love, sex, and family. In our previous creations, we explored various topics related to couples: first there was jealousy in *Domestic Tale*, then love quarrels in *Lucha Libre*. In *With Thelma*, we disturbed the functioning of a couple's daily routine by dropping a three-year-old child into their lives, and in our feature film *Madly in Life*, it was a parent's dementia that put a couple to the test. With this project, we sought to explore sexuality "outside" the couple. Whether through fantasies or openly voiced, all couples grapple with outside aspirations, and managing one's desire and attraction is a vast topic in any love arrangement.

We therefore placed Rémy and Sandra in a situation where they have to schedule an entire series of infidelities throwing them back to their past love lives. We thus took two pillars of heteronormativity, exclusivity and reproduction, and played them against one another. If Rémy and Sandra want a child together, they will have to first go see elsewhere. And once they have, in the end, reached a point where their relationship is in shambles, they regroup towards the essential, what they've lost and now want to rekindle more than anything: the pleasure they have living together, to be in the specific sphere that is their relationship, in short, their love.



Just as in *Hibernatus*, we wanted to start off with an absurd scientific premise to trigger a reflection on sexuality and reproduction, using comedy as our background. We wanted to follow Rémy and Sandra through this incongruous adventure, discovering through a series of former partners a number of variations on the same theme – as the exes have also developed their own system within the couple they’re currently involved in – and question the way in which we collectively approach the project of having a child, often transforming our offspring into trophies, a tool for social recognition, or a feature to add to one’s picture of the perfect life. We hope and have the ambition to make the public laugh when faced with the illusions and taboos that structure the way we collectively function, and to explore with humor the diktats that pressure us into

a monocultural single family pattern that inhibits our creativity, in order to be able to reinvent how we live together.

As in our previous projects, we were intent on developing a specific formal expression supporting the story and enhancing comedy through visual stylization. In the film’s structure, we created a space with a rather particular narrative status that is slightly off with respect to the rest of the film’s naturalism. There, the scenes taking place in the Room of Exes and the metaphorical sexual scenes represent the characters’ mental space, the unexplored inner territories, that Sandra and Rémy are going to open up and discover. In these scenes, sexuality is always depicted in a symbolic manner, playing hide-and-seek and dissimulation games with the settings,

with movement. Nudity is approached in a humble and playful way: the body in its simplest state, a body whose purpose is to move, invent, laugh.

We organized the casting process rather gradually. We like working with a mix of actors and actresses with whom we have built a professional relationship over the years and others that we’re discovering. This is reflected in our main characters, embodied by Lucie Debay, with whom we worked for our first feature film *Madly in Life*, and Lazare Gousseau, with whom we’ve collaborated for the first time, convinced by his humanism, his sensitivity and his natural flair for comedy. Lazare enables us to experience, in a tender and subtle way, the masculine insecurities of our world.



## ABOUT THE DIRECTORS

Ann Sirot and Raphaël Balboni are a pair of fiction author-directors. They have directed eight short films and two features films together. Through these projects, they have developed an unconventional and offbeat world, a hybrid and atypical form of cinema epitomized by surreal and joyful oneirism. With their short films *Lucha Libre* and *With Thelma*, they established a work method based on free and spontaneous acting, a lively rhythm through jump cut editing and an organic narrative construction where happy accidents find their way into the storyline.

Their first feature film, *Madly in Life*, is a bittersweet comedy in which we follow a couple grappling with a parent suffering from an Alzheimer-like disease. The film received seven Magritte awards as well as numerous other awards in various festivals.

Their second feature film, *The (Ex)perience of Love*, is a romantic comedy through which the authors question the way we regard love, desire, experience, and the wish to have a child.



## FILMOGRAPHY

**2023 THE (EX)PERIENCE OF LOVE - LE SYNDROME DES AMOURS PASSÉES**

International Critics' Week 2023

**2021 MADLY IN LIFE - UNE VIE DÉMENTE**

2022 Magritte Awards – Best Film, Best Scenario, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Actor in a supporting role, Best Set Design, Best Costumes

**2021 MUCH IN COMMON - DES CHOSES EN COMMUN** (Short)

**2017 WITH THELMA - AVEC THELMA** (Short)

2018 Magritte Award for Best Fiction Short Film

**2014 LUCHA LIBRE** (Short)

**2012 DOMESTIC TALE - FABLE DOMESTIQUE** (Short)

**2011 THE WOLF'S VERSION - LA VERSION DU LOUP** (Short)

# CAST

Sandra  
Remi  
Marion  
Justine  
Celine  
Julie  
Stéphane

Lucie DEBAY  
Lazare GOUSSEAU  
Florence LOIRET CAILLE  
Ninon BORSEI  
Florence JANAS  
Nora HAMZAWI  
Hervé Piron

# CREW

Directors and Screenwriters  
Ann SIROT and Raphaël BALBONI

Director of Photography  
Jorge PIQUER RODRIGUEZ

Editors  
Sophie VERCRUYSSSE and Raphaël BALBONI

Sound  
Aline HUBER, Agathe POCHE and Gilles BERNARDEAU

1st Assistant Directors  
Camille MOL

Set  
Julien DUBOURG

Costumes  
Frédéric DENIS

Production Manager  
Sara DUFOSSÉ

Original Music  
Julie ROUÉ

Producers  
Julie ESPARBES, Delphine SCHMIT and Guillaume DREYFUS

Production Company  
Hélicotronc

Co Production Company  
Tripode Productions

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International Sales  
Be For Films

French Distributor  
KMBO



# TECHNICAL DETAILS

Ratio	2.35
Sound Format	5.1
Running Time	89'
Original Version	French
Year of Production	2023
Country	Belgium - France



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