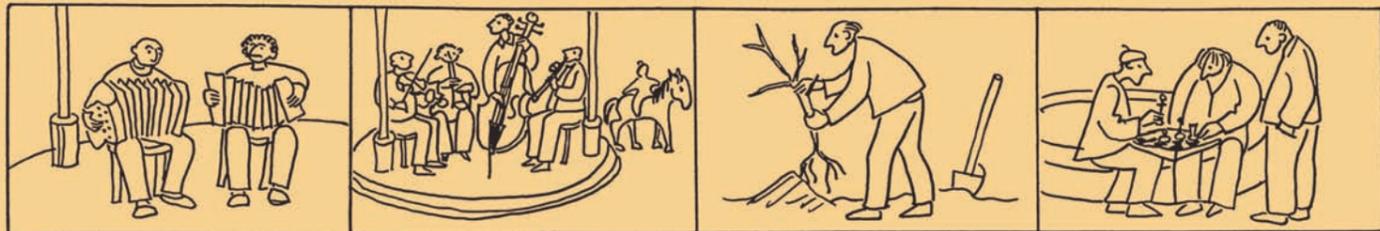


gardens in autumn

A film by OTAR IOSSELIANI

synopsis

Vincent is a minister in power, not too ugly, good drinker, eater, pretty mistress. As soon as he loses his job, she drops him. Then Vincent starts living again. Little by little, he enters milieus he had forgotten or never known, discovers or rediscovers simple joys, and at last he gets to know the people he led for so long by totally ignoring them. This apprenticeship to life at an inappropriate age will be an occasion for droll scenes, funny and cruel...



OTAR IOSSELIANI

Born in 1934 in Tbilisi (Georgia). He studies at VGIK, the Moscow's cinema school. He directs several films in Georgia. Since 1982, he continues his career in France.

1959/65 Director of 10 shorts / 1962 April / 1966 The Fall of Leaves / 1970 Once a Blackbird / 1976 Pastoral / 1982 7 Pieces for Black & White Cinema / 1983 Euskadi / 1984 Favorites of the Moon / 1988 The Small Monastery in Tuscany / 1989 And Then There Was Light / 1992 Chasing Butterflies / 1994 Seule Géorgie / 1996 Brigands, chapter VII / 1998 Home Sweet Home / 2001 Monday Morning / 2006 Gardens in autumn

cast

Minister 1 Séverin BLANCHET / Mother Michel PICCOLI / Mistress Muriel MOTTE / Minister 2 Pascal VINCENT / Father of Bailiff Jean DOUCHET

crew

Director & Script Otar IOSSELIANI / Story board Otar IOSSELIANI, Nana IOSSELIANI, Nougzar TARIELASHVILI / Director of photography William LUBTCHANSKY Production designer Manu de CHAUVIGNY, Yves BROVER / Costumes Maira RAMEDHAN-LEVI / Editing Otar IOSSELIANI, Ewa LENKIEWICZ / Sound Jérôme THIAULT / Sound Editing Georges-Henri MAUCHANT, Emmanuèle LABBE / Mixing Anne LE CAMPION / Music Nicolas ZOURABICHVILI / Production manager Christian LAMBERT / A film produced by Martine MARIGNAC / Co-production Pierre Grise Productions (France), Cinemaundici (Italy) Cinema Without Frontiers LLC (Russia) / With the participation of FMB2 FILMS, CNC, Agence Fédérale de la Culture et de la Cinématographie (Russie), Canal +, TPS Star / And the support of Eurimages, Media, Cofimage 17, Procirep, Nafta Moskva.

France / Italy / Russia • 2006 • 2H01 • 1.66 • Dolby SR • color

Pierre Grise Productions present

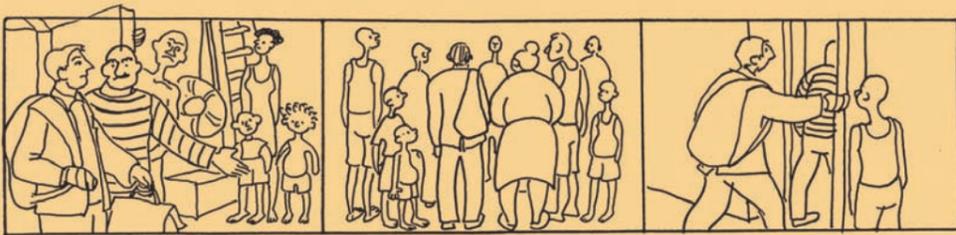
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A film by
OTAR IOSSELIANI

with
SEVERIN BLANCHET
MICHEL PICCOLI
MURIEL MOTTE
PASCAL VINCENT
LILY LAVINA
DENIS LAMBERT
JACYNTHE JACQUET
MOONHA N'DIAYE
SALOME BEDINE-MKHEIDZE
MATHIAS JUNG
CHRISTIAN GRIOT
ALBERT MENDY
MANU DE CHAUVIGNY
JEAN DOUCHET



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a talk with Otar Iosseliani

by Claire Vassé

Gardens in Autumn tells the story of a minister who is forced to leave power but finds the joy of living among his own, simply by drinking, playing music, and rediscovering the places of his childhood. Does the title mean one must wait for autumn to reach this philosophy?

Good question! For some, yes. They set up their lives, have a career, and are stuck by not having a metaphysical look on the phenomenon of life. They miss the joy of living, they think what is essential is moving along on the way to success. But if destiny smiles at them, they may wake up, and begin living again. Our hero has power, he is in the right spot. And he is booted out... thankfully for him. We are very happy for him because he will be able to live at last, quite simply. Sometimes this happens very late in time, in the autumn of life... Autumn is the time for regrets, regretting all the time lost...

In what way does your film take root in a precise period, real facts?

I do not allude to a precise period, even less to real facts. The film is based on a phenomenon we all know: man's avidity, the thirst for ever more power. It is a parable on this temptation to which everyone is confronted with at one point in life. A mechanism one may see in the politicians of our times, struggling, unbound, in a race for power which always ends in fiasco. People who thirst for power are a bit sick in my eyes, not enti-



rely normal psychologically! They try to create auras of wise men who know what they are doing. But everyone is mistaken. And as everyone is mistaken, this preoccupation to take the position of power is constantly ridiculed. There are many wiser and more lucid people, but they do not wish to hold power, it has always been that way.

May one say this film is more optimistic than the two previous ones?

Yes, to a certain degree, as here our hero manages to find a new way, which was not the case in my two previous films. Even if it is true that in France, a minister rarely becomes a gardener... It's a pity as it is quite pleasant!

What was the starting point for *Gardens in Autumn*?

I was in the offices of the minister of culture when François Léotard was about to replace Jack Lang. The offices were empty, we were waiting for the new crew, there were papers everywhere, total chaos! I guess it is the same every time there is a change in power, and that was the beginning of *Gardens in Autumn*: to make a film about someone who leads our country. But to do it in a very abstract way. One does not really know in which ministry works Vincent. One may guess more or less that it is the ministry of agriculture, or something like it.

What is the secret in your films that reach the universal?

There are two forces in each work: a bold force, which leads to irreparable mistakes, and a modest force, simple, without pretense: the force of those who understand at the outset that it is best to do nothing than to do a nothing! I like this kind of formula which gets to the point, proverbs. What is important to me, is when I show the film to the Russians. They didn't speak a word of French, and they understood everything, maybe even better than us who are fluent in the language. Perhaps because they attributed to the phrases a meaning which was not at all concrete. It is through the mise en scène that they understood what it was about. I don't like "wordy" cinema, which allows the spectator to close his eyes and still understand. However I intend to have the narration understood without understanding the language. Another rule: never use known physiognomies. Known actors enter your film with their cinematic biography, memories of what they left in our heads previously, associations.



There are a lot of animals in your film. What is their status? Again a reference to the fables of Aesop...

They reflect the ambitions of the characters. In fact, our future ex-minister does not have any animals. He visits farms with cows, but he has no animals of his own, contrary to his successor who, at the outset, has a leopard. The leopard is traditionally found in the court of kings, princes. It shines on the great, it enhances the entourage of power. But in my film, he is promptly put in a cage. At the outset, one understands that power can easily be controlled.

And when a little donkey kicks the hind of a bigger one...

Men handle their affairs, they parade. Animals too, they have their affairs to settle, their lives. And there is the presence of the bird that goes from one to the other, like a heritage, a symbol. Vincent leaves his office without taking it, while his successor takes possession of him with no qualms about it, just as his team tries to steal everything: ashtrays, snuff boxes... The idea of taking hold of things that don't belong to you pace the film.

One sees this game in all of your films. Objects are there to circulate, not to be the possession of one person...

Except for the statue of Venus, which moves from one apartment to another apartment but remains in the hands of the same lady. This statue is her taste, her world...

... whom you promptly make fun of...

Yes. If you visit antique shops, there are objects that belonged to someone a long time ago. I try not to own objects. They have their own biography, they reflect a past life.

You said you were weary of the word. Your mise en scène indeed bares witness to a pronounced taste for the comic gesture. Pierre Etaix in the first scene, is it a homage?

No, an overture, as in opera, to show people who have not forgotten that all must come to an end. It is in a way the key to the film. Once the film is over, the spectator can think of this scene again, at these old people who negotiate for their coffins as if they were in a shop. Even where they will be going, they want to own something!

When the homeless are expelled from the ex-minister's apartment, he joins them under the bridge, by the Seine. In the end, they are all a part of the same world?

Yes. At that point, their differences don't count, they are mortals. They are not angry at each other. Everything calms down.

The film takes place in Paris, but you always remain at man's level, where the picturesque of monuments has no place...

Paris or another big city, no matter. I could have shot the film in Rome... but not Berlin, which has become a nightmare, a candy box for tourists. Paris gives the aspect of a very neutral architecture and I try to choose neighborhoods that are not picturesque, where life is possible. With small streets, bistros...

Here again, we are miles away from the cliché of the Parisian cafe...

Yes, the walls are available to anyone, you can write whatever you want. It's the freedom to do what you want in that space. But after it is sold, the walls are covered in white.

I have the impression that in *Gardens in Autumn*, as in your other films, the freest characters are the musicians...

To give the character of Vincent the possibility of leaving a world and finding it again, one has to invent that world. So I imagined him as a bit of a musician, not too bad at it, on top of it! Music is a pure pleasure and Vincent recognizes his soul mate in a female musician he did not even look at when he was a minister. It is only once he has become a simple mortal that he notices her. Life isn't more complicated than that!

If I say to you your film is an ode to freedom, would you accept that definition?

Yes, of course. But the question of freedom is at the root of many of my films.

