北京国际短片联展
Beijing International Short Film Festival 2025/11.08-11.16

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BISSFF2025 | Correspondence 通信计划045：Immortals永生

This program involves conducting brief email interviews with the directors of the international films featured in the festival, in lieu of the traditional Q&A session that follows the screenings. Through this program, we hope to provide a platform for filmmakers to discuss their work and share their insights with our audience in China.

为了跨越种种障碍，开辟更多交流空间，我们设置了"BISFF Correspondence 通信计划"对部分国际单元的参展作者进行系列访谈，这些访谈将在作品放映后发布在联展各个媒体平台。

Immortals | Les immortelles | 永生
Myriam Jacob-Allard 米里亚姆·雅各布－阿拉尔
2025｜0:26:40｜Canada｜French｜Asian Premiere

Director: **Myriam Jacob-Allard**
Interviewer & Translator: Anqi Liu
Coordinator & Editor: Suliko

导演：米里亚姆·雅各布－阿拉尔
采访、翻译：刘安琦
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Q1: This film uses soundtracks from vampire films to structure the interactions between mother and daughter, sisters, and grandmother and granddaughter. As a result, the matrilineal family takes on a kind of dramatized mystique. Why did you choose to explore "infatuation" within the context of matrilineal inheritance? In your view, are there particular similarities between the dynamics of family life and established vampire narratives?

A1: I am very interested in the structure of family, this imposed community, and especially in imagining how this structure could exist outside of patriarchal Western society. So, when I started obsessively watching so many vampire films, I realized that the mother was always dead or absent from the vampire's life, as though it were impossible for the mother figure to be associated with immortality, and even more in this passionate context. In this way, the concept of immortality that we see in vampire stories eliminates the notion of family, replacing it with the idea of an everlasting individual, unique and alone. The family dynamics are then either absent or repressed in this narrative: that's why I use the classic vampire storyline to rewrite a counter-story that integrates the matriarchal family, and more precisely those feminine figures, at the heart of it. I was interested in finding a way to reconsider the notion of immortality within a collective context, rather than an individual one.

Q2: The four chapters repeat the theme of encounter-infatuation-separation across different characters, yet each carry subtle stylistic variations. How did you orchestrate the relationships between these chapters to create such an intricate yet coherent rhythm in the end?

A2: The idea was to repeat the same storyline with different sources of found footage quotations. I wanted to emphasize the repetition that is intrinsic to that kind of film. We know by heart those classic stories, yet we listen to them over and over, like we do for Hollywood films or fairy tales. We know the outcome, the progression, the climax, but still, we want to hear them again; it feels comforting, like children do with lullabies. I was amazed that I could tell the same story using exactly the same words, but from different sources, over and over—to realize that all those films, whether they are mainstream or B movies, use not only the same storyline but also the exact same words or sentences. So, I started to collect all those similar quotations ("you are marvelous, " "forever and ever, " "don't leave me, " "I must leave you") to eate a collection that summarizes the classic dramatic curve of the vampire film and use them to create those four chapters.

By the repetition, I wanted to see how the story is affected when it repeats itself, but when it is told by different person. With the use of lip-sync, I could let some individuals speak with the words of others: to connect the individual to the collective. So, I started to write the first chapter using longer quotations to establish the story. Instinctively, I used the longer quotations, the ones with more pauses, that are more intelligible. As for the others, until the last chapter, I was left with smaller quotations, quicker rhythms, using much more different sources. The rhythm became very different from one chapter to another, imposed by the cadence of the source itself, which represents well, in the end, those different kinds of relationships (for instance, in the last chapter, when the story is reversed and the granddaughter becomes the vampire who bites the grandmother).

Q3: The use of visual footage is also quite remarkable. Fragments of moving images are deftly arranged against black backgrounds—reminiscent of early cinema's celluloid tricks for presenting fantastical scenes. But unlike traditional techniques that strive for illusionism, your material—especially faces and hands—openly exposes separation and dissonance. This gives the dramatic expression a subversive quality. Was this sense of contradiction intentional in your technical choices?

A3: I am always interested in those contradictions, even when they are not intentional, because of the tension that emerges from it. I guess I was influenced at first by the aesthetic of old movies, as the first Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror from F. W. Murnau was a silent film; also, theater and puppet show affect the aesthetic of this work. For me, this strategy of using rotoscoping, this old cinema technique, was the idea to go back to the essential, which also echoes collage and scrapbooking techniques. Maybe here, it was not the intention to create an illusion, but rather to reveal the mystery. By returning to its simplest form and using the black background to bring all separate objects together (and failing to reconnect them), I wanted people to use their imagination to construct the rest of the setup of the film: so the film becomes very intimate and different for each person.

Q4: You mentioned that the home movie footage used in the film dates back to 1994. Were these materials originally created as documentary records? And at what point in the creative process did you decide to collage these personal archives with elements of vampire film?

A4: Yes, my family got a video camera in 1994, so my parents started documenting every family event. I also started using this camera to document trivial things from our everyday life. So, we accumulated a lot of footage over the years, which I like to use from time to time in my work.

Immortals, Myriam Jacob-Allard, 2025

Q5: Beyond the characters, you've also included fragmented objects, landscapes, and animals as markers that hint at the environment. So, while the film appears straightforward, it actually contains very rich scene design. How do you typically select these visual elements from complex domestic and natural setting? Were there any unexpected choices along the way?

A5: I didn't plan to use them right at the beginning: I made the decision after filming the images of heads and hands when I started doing the editing. I thought there were some elements of context missing to refer to the original films. But I didn't want to use props that were directly related to the aesthetic of vampires; I preferred to subvert the codes of this genre. Instead, from each original scene, I looked for some props from the original setup that reminded me of some objects from my daily life. So, I started looking in my family archive footage to find those props: a door, a candle, a plant, etc. It was a bit like digging into my own archive to find trivial objects and collect them. So, I took each archive and used the technique of rotoscoping, which was a long process since the archive was often shot with a handheld camera. But through this long process of cutting out the familiar from their context, each trivial object became precious and gained another significance: being removed from the family context, the objects became something else, related to something collective that anybody can relate to.

Q6: As a huge vampire film enthusiast, I'm especially curious—which works did you draw the soundtracks from? would you be willing to share some films that you find particularly distinctive in this regard?

A6: Because I didn't use the original soundtracks of those films, but only the dubbed version in French, it is not easy to recognize the movies, since the voices are not from the original actors. But the music is still the same, so I think we can relate to or recognize some movies references. That choice was deliberate; I didn't want the references to be too obvious, as I decontextualized everything in the film and brought it to its simplest form. I used about thirty different films to make Les immortelles. The one I found the most interesting and complex was Les lèvres rouges (Daughters of Darkness, 1971): a free adaptation of the book Carmilla by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: the film tells the story of this first vampire woman. Les lèvres rouges is a co-production of Belgian, French, and German, and one of the vampires is an actress from Quebec. So, it was particularly uncanny for me the first time I saw that film: I felt this culture gap, this dissociation of the familiar and the foreign. And of course, this film is so beautiful and presents a passionate story between female vampires… so very far from Dracula. And Et mourir de plaisir (Blood and Roses, 1960) also presents strong females figures and a reinterpretation of Carmilla. I also used some more mainstream films like Twilight; even if this series of films tried to modernize the vampire tale, they use pretty much the same classic storyline, which was very good for my collection of footage quotations.

Now, I am also curious to hear what your most significant vampire films are as well!

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More information: https://www.bisff.co/selection/immortals