

HOMEMADE FILMS, SISTER PRODUCTIONS & SENSE PRODUCTION PRESENT

Official Selection

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Toronto International
Film Festival 2018

HER JOB

A FILM BY NIKOS LABÔT

FEATURE FILM, 89', DCP, COLOR, 1.85:1, DIGITAL SOUND, GREECE-FRANCE-SERBIA 2018

PUBLICITY

REQUIRED VIEWING

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SYNOPSIS

Panayiota, a 37-year-old illiterate housewife, leads a quiet life with her husband and their children in a modest neighbourhood in Athens, Greece. To cope with the recession that has been affecting her family for some time, Panayiota for the first time in her life, finds a job as a cleaner in a shopping mall. Despite the ruthlessness of her work-environment, Panayiota breaks free from domestic monotony and gradually gains the respect she never had from her family. When a series of layoffs starts, she will have to face again her personal dead ends. But Panayiota cannot be the same anymore.





INTERVIEW NIKOS LABÔT

Her Job is your first feature film. It is the portrait of a woman who's trying to liberate herself, a social chronicle, but never a drama. Why did you want to tell the story of this woman and of her surprising journey? What was the starting point of this story?

I was inspired by a true story that took place in the north of Greece a few years ago: the story of a woman's journey – who by finding a job as an unskilled worker – finds not only independence but also personal empowerment. I was amazed at this woman's point of view regarding all the hard circumstances she had to pass through in her work environment. I was asking myself : *how could this woman be so innocent and naïve to feel like she's found a new self under such terrible work conditions?* The shocking thing was that she was considering herself very lucky to find this job. She was talking about it as if it had been the most important thing in her life so far. This simple but genuine and unique story touched my heart, revealing and upsetting.

Indeed, the whole movie is built around Panayiota's character. We follow the rhythm of her daily routine...

Yes, absolutely. I wanted to tell this story as realistic as real life. In real life, situations are developing in front of our eyes. However, in cinema you have to discover things all over again. So in order to achieve *my* realism and capture these moments of Panayiota's daily routine, I tried to follow precisely the emotions she felt at each moment. Marisha Triantafyllidou, the main actress and I, worked on that for almost two years. We worked on the physical and emotional details. I let myself open to go as deep as possible toward her soul.

Speaking of realism, what was at stake for you as the writer and the director?

When writing the screenplay, we tried to have as realistic and down-to-earth dialogues as possible.

However, during the long rehearsals and the actual shooting, my method with the actors included a few improvisations, which allowed them to reach lively and spontaneous performances. In order to stay faithful to my vision and also to the main character's emotional state, I had to keep my camera as close as possible to the actors both physically and emotionally. I told all the actors that they would be filmed mostly from a medium shot, and that I would be close to them at every moment. So during the shoot I chose to stay simple and humble all the way... but during editing, my editor Dounia Sichov and I had to try and capture the inner subtle rhythm of Panayiota. My goal was that the rhythm of the film would give the impression that what we see is happening right under our eyes.

How did you come to work with Marisha Triantafyllidou?

Choosing the actress for the main character was a difficult task. Therefore I auditioned many good actresses. Before casting I did not overly explain the main character because I wanted to see what an actress, who usually uses her instinct, could bring to the part. I need actors who can feel the character and respond automatically to it in order to dig deeper into the emotions. I find it more natural like that. I noticed that Marisha was vividly bringing unknown and specific aspects of Panayiota to the surface. I could feel the same hidden force that lies within the seemingly weak Panayiota. I could see that Marisha too carried a hidden burden which could prove very useful in incarnating the challenging part of Panayiota. While still being beautiful, she can transform herself into a very humble and ordinary woman.

The economic context matters in this story. Recession is hitting hard and it explains the difficulties Panayiota's family is facing. But also, Panayiota has to deal with a ruthless system of exploitation and competition when she starts to work in this cleaning company, undermined by patriarchy.

Greece has changed a lot over the last decade. I feel it every day, around my family, my friends. I am affected too but I didn't want to make a movie about the economic crisis. Of course, we witness it in the background but I'd rather capture the emotions that people feel under those circumstances, the emotional consequences of the crisis. These characters' lives may seem ordinary but they still have a strong emotional impact on me. Panayiota's story describes the absurdity of a system. In that way, *Her Job* is also a political film, not only because it is set during the crisis and clearly describes the decaying portrait of a society through its working and social relationships, but also because we preferred to show the crisis' impact on our characters' emotional and personal lives, which is negative but, surprisingly, also positive in a way that it brings Panayiota a new life and sense of self.

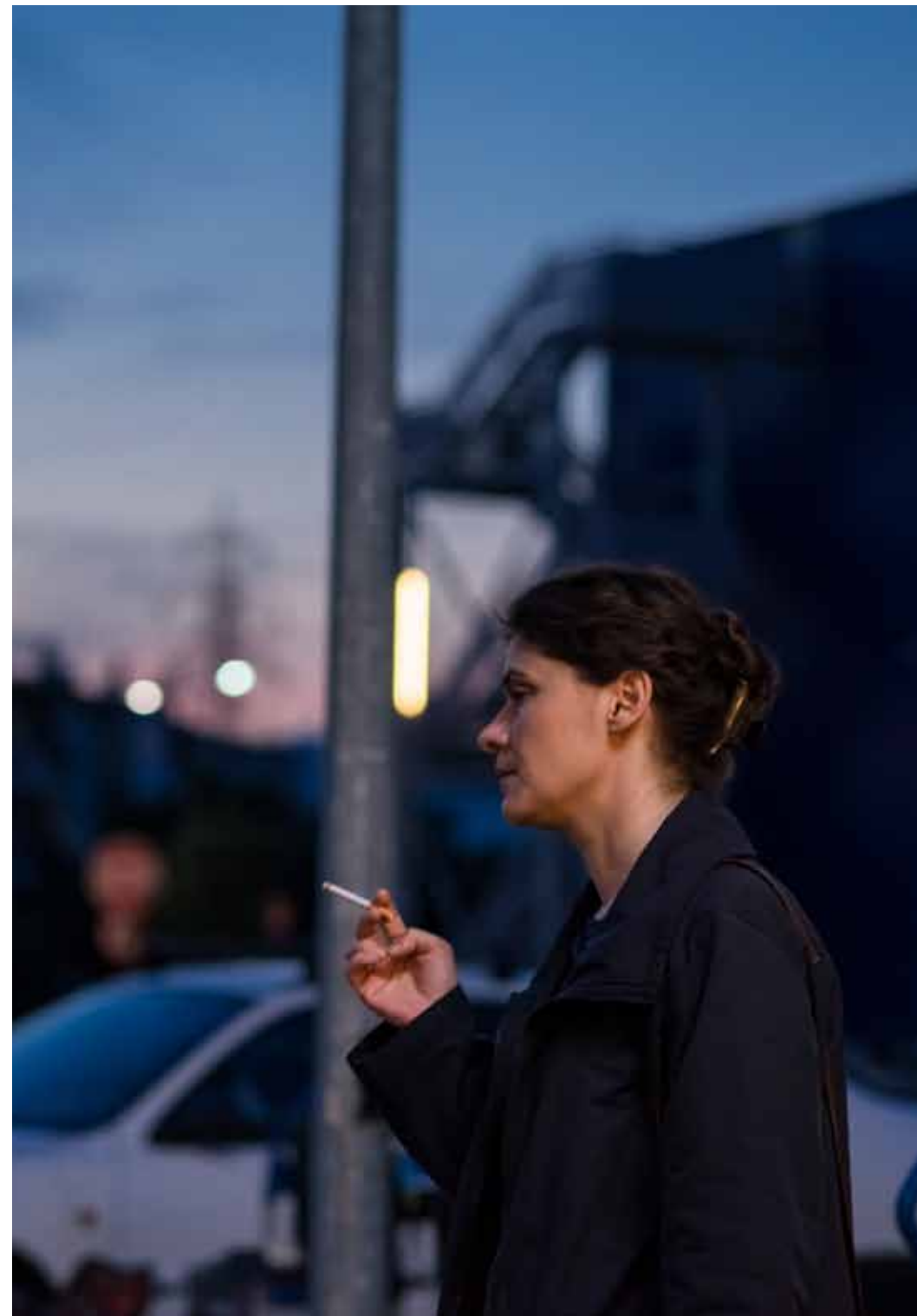
Still, working conditions among cleaning sections of private companies, are a big issue in Greece. It's been getting worse since the crisis. I met with several cleaners, who read the script and described to me different kinds of situations. You can see similar stories on the news. Some people try to fight, like the two unionists in the movie. Most of the employees work under the fear of getting fired so they give up. People like Panayiota don't get involved in politics. Panayiota is very naïve and fragile, she is also illiterate, but she feels afraid and ashamed all the time. She is a housewife who is trying to liberate herself. We can see how slowly this process is going. But things start to change, little by little, and we understand it through some details in the shots, in the locations, in the way the house is being run differently.

About the patriarchy, I would say that this family is a stereotype of the typical Greek family. Kostas, the husband, can't stand not being able to work while his wife is. He understands that they need the money, and that his wife is doing her best to help their family. I wanted to stay true to this character as well. He's not just the macho type, he's also fragile and worried. He is a victim of a situation too.

What was the biggest challenge during the shooting?

Actually there was a combination of challenges. At first, the biggest challenge was filming a character that is set up to be so ordinary that possibly no one would like or pay attention to. At the same time, it was trying to find nuances in the character so that we fully understand and empathise with her emotions and actions, and staying true to the idea that this person is full of love and strength. Human nature is very complicated and people have flaws. They are trying to do the right thing, but often they don't, and they can't. Ultimately, there is pain in all of us and yet, we always find some hope. Keeping that feeling alive in order for people to relate to Panayiota, that was the biggest trick.

Interview by Ava Cahen



BIOGRAPHIES

NIKOS LABÔT

Nikos Labôt studied film direction in Athens, Greece. He has worked as an assistant director in feature and short films in Greece and France. He has shot music videos, 3 short films and a creative documentary. *Her Job* is his first feature-film as a director.

Selective filmography

- 2013** *The Immortals at the Southern Point of Europe* (Documentary)
(co-director) (2013 Thessaloniki Film Festival)
- 2009** *The Dog* (Short)
- 2005** *Impro-walk* (Short)
- 2001** *Kinisi 0-0* (Short)



© Photo: Panagiotis Zeppos

MARISHA TRIANTAFYLLIDOU

Marisha Triantafyllidou was born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and grew up in Thessaloniki, Greece. She is an established actress in Greek film and television. She lives and works in Athens.

Selective filmography

- 2017** *The surface of things* by Nancy Biniadaki
- 2015** *Impressions of a drowned Man* by Kyros Papavasileiou
(Tiger Competition, Rotterdam IFF 2015),
Volta by Stella Kyriakopoulou (Sundance IFF 2015,
Best Short Film at the Hellenic Film Academy Awards 2015)
At Home by Athanasios Karanikolas (Forum, Berlin IFF 2014)
- 2014** *Xenia* by Panos Koutras (Un Certain Regard, Cannes IFF 2014)
- 2011** *Wasted Youth* by Argyris Papadimitropoulos
(Tiger Competition, Rotterdam IFF 2011)
- 2010** *Homeland* by Syllas Tzoumerkas (Critics' Week, Venice IFF 2010)
Casus Belli by Yorgos Zois (Venice IFF 2010,
Best Short Film at the Hellenic Film Academy Awards 2010)
- 2009** *Eden is West* by Costa-Gavras (Berlin IFF 2009)
- 2001** *One Day in August* Constantine Giannaris
(Berlin IFF - International Competition 2001)

CREDITS

HOMEMADE FILMS, SISTER PRODUCTIONS AND SENSE PRODUCTION

PRESENT **HER JOB**

A FILM BY **NIKOS LABÔT**

WRITTEN BY **KATERINA KLEITSIOTI & NIKOS LABÔT**

WITH **MARISHA TRIANTAFYLLIDOU DIMITRIS IMELLOS KONSTANTINOS
GOGOULOS MARIA FILINI ELENI KARAGIORGI DANAI PRIMALI ORFEAS
AGGELOPOULOS DIMITRA VLAGOPOULOU GEORGIA TSAGKARAKI IRINI
ASIMAKOPOULOU ARETI SEINTARIDOU**

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **DIONYSIS EFTHYMIPOULOS GSC**

EDITOR **DOUNIA SICHOV**

MUSIC **ONNO**

SET DESIGNER **DAFNI KOUTRA**

COSTUME DESIGNER **VASILEIA ROZANA**

MAKE-UP DESIGNER **KYRIAKY MELIDOU**

HAIR DESIGNER **HRONIS TZIMOS**

SOUND **YANNIS ANTIPAS BENOIT GARGONNE JEAN-GUY VERRAN**

COLOR GRADING **ISABELLE JULIEN**

PRODUCED BY **MARIA DRANDAKI AND JULIE PARATIAN**

CO-PRODUCER **MILAN STOJANOVIC**

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