



# see the sea

with

**A Summer Dress**

**Two films by François Ozon**

**A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE**

## **IMPORTANT NOTICE TO CRITICS**

Since SEE THE SEA has a number of suspenseful scenes which depend upon the element of surprise we would appreciate your discretion when describing the film's plot and especially its ending.

# see the sea

Written and directed by François Ozon

Starring

Sasha Hails as Sasha  
Marina de Van as Tatiana

Director of Photography Yorick le Saux  
Sound Daniel Sobrino  
Editor Jeanne Moutard  
Music Eric Neveux  
Producers Olivier Delbosc & Marc Missonnier,  
Fidélité Productions  
Co-Produced by Nicolas Brévière, Local Films

## **A Summer Dress**

Written and directed by François Ozon

Starring

Frédéric Mangenot as Frédéric  
Lucia Sanchez as Lucia  
Sébastien Charles as Sébastien

Director of Photography Yorick le Saux  
Sound Benoît Hillebrant  
Editor Jeanne Moutard  
Production Design Sandrine Cayron  
Producer Olivier Delbosc,  
Fidélité Productions

France • 1997 • 15 mins (A SUMMER DRESS) and 52 minutes (SEE THE SEA)  
Color • 35 mm • 1:1.66 • Mono • In French with English subtitles

NB. A SUMMER DRESS plays before SEE THE SEA

### **A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE**

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# **see the sea**

Eagerly received at this year's New Directors/New Films Festival, SEE THE SEA heralds the arrival of a sparkling new talent in French cinema—François Ozon. On the beautiful holiday island of Yeu, the solitude of Sasha, a young mother awaiting her husband's return, is broken by the appearance of Tatiana, a brooding backpacker who asks to camp outside her cottage. Sasha grows increasingly fascinated with her mysterious visitor whose demeanor gradually becomes more ominous as she insinuates herself into Sasha's home. With its stunning cinematography, SEE THE SEA provocatively uncovers the dark and sinister undercurrents swirling beneath curiosity and attraction, ultimately challenging our assumptions about desire, identity and motherhood.

## **A Summer Dress**

On summer holiday with his boyfriend, Frederic's encounter with a stranger on the beach further complicates his already ambivalent teenage sexuality.



## **François Ozon**

François Ozon was born in 1967 in Paris. He graduated University with a Masters degree in cinema, then attended the prestigious film school FEMIS. Since then he has never stopped filming, producing one or two films a year in Super 8, video, 16mm and eventually in 35mm. Many of these films were selected by short film festivals worldwide and have been shown on the Canal + and Arte channels in France. With LA PETITE MORT in 1995 he began his ongoing association with Fidélité Productions, and that same year directed a documentary about the politician Lionel Jospin, just prior to the French Presidential elections. In 1996 he was awarded the "Léopard de Demain" for A SUMMER DRESS at the Locarno Film Festival. This year he premiered his first full-length feature, SITCOM, in Critics Week at Cannes.

According to critic Claire Vassé, François Ozon is "inspired by a high and demanding idea of film. He is distinguished above all by his predilection for portrayals of transgression and sexuality that lead the viewer into shadowy zones he would never have thought to visit."

David Rooney wrote of SEE THE SEA in Variety that "Ozon manipulates audience expectations with considerable authority, creating a complex psychological minefield from what's basically a very simple two-hander. The location's unpopulated beaches, woods and hills serve to hint at both beauty and menace, and the uneasy tone is deftly echoed in the performances of Hails and de Van."

# François Ozon Filmography

1986-1990                      Made thirty Super 8 films

1991 DEUX PLUS UN    (9 min, 16mm)

LE TROU MADAME    (Documentary, 10 min, Video)

PEAU CONTRE PEAU    (8 min, Video)

UNE GOUTTE DE SANG    (10 min, Video)

1992 THOMAS RECONSTITUÉ    (10 min, Video)

1993 VICTOR    (14 min, 35mm)

1994 UNE ROSE ENTRE NOUS    (27 min, 35mm)

ACTION VÉRITÉ    (4 min, 35mm)

1995 LA PETITE MORT    (26 min, 35mm)

JOSPIN S'ÉCLAIRE    (Documentary, 52 min)

1996 A SUMMER DRESS (UNE ROBE D'ÉTÉ) (15 min,

35mm)

1997 SCÈNES DE LIT    (26 min, 35mm)

1997 SEE THE SEA (REGARDE LA MER) (52 min, 35mm)

1998 SITCOM    (80 min, 35mm)

1998 LES AMANTS CRIMINELS    (in preparation)

# François Ozon talks about see the sea

**The Actresses.** When Sasha Hails [who plays Sasha], became pregnant, we stayed in touch during her pregnancy and coming to motherhood. It made me think that it might be time to deal with the topic in a film. Besides she had already starred in *Une Rose Entre Nous* (A Rose Between Us), my graduating short for film school. Since she didn't want to be separated from her baby, this project enabled her to reconcile her wish to be both mother and actress.

As for Marina de Van [who plays Tatiana], I had been very impressed by the short film she directed, *Bien Sous Tous Rapports* (Good From All Perspectives). Her personality, her strength, and her talent - both as actress and director - made me want to meet her. And I soon realized that her physique was right for the part. She was ready to endanger herself and accepted to play a role that would not always be gratifying.

I also felt strongly that an interesting chemistry would result from the encounter of those two actresses, especially from the explosive contrast between their physiques.

**Shooting.** In order to follow the development of the two characters, the film was shot in chronological order. I was somewhat unsure, in a haze, about certain scenes, but building on what we had shot, things became more obvious as we went along.

Besides, we had to follow the life patterns of the baby and to respect her hours of sleep. We used no tricks to make her cry; she would naturally do so as soon as her mother left her sight.

I didn't want Sasha to know the story. I wanted her to be virgin of the plot and discover it day by day. I just told her it was about herself and her baby, and that it was set on an island. I believe that this way of shooting left her free, so she could act without anticipating too much.

**Point of View.** Points of view were the true problem of the directing: When to quit Sasha's point of view to enter Tatiana's? I finally decided that the film would be shot almost exclusively from Sasha's point of view, with scraps of Tatiana's contaminating the story here and there. I shot the scenes seen through Tatiana's eyes

(at the supermarket and in the graveyard) without knowing where they would go. I only found their place during the editing. The feeling of danger pervading

**Anguish, suspense, horror.** I wished to show blocks of time without giving any explanations or psychological justifications. I just wanted to impart sensations, impressions and signs that the audience would be free to accept or reject. Journeys are shot in real time whereas they are normally shortened. I wanted the audience to have time to ask itself questions from which anxiety and suspense would derive.

The gaps in the narration are a source of frustration for some viewers. They force the audience to imagine what may have happened between two sequences. If the film triggers violent reactions it is mainly because people project horrible things onto it. It's quite fascinating that people would imagine things even more atrocious than what I have shown.

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# The New York Times

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 1998



Marina de Van as the threatening interloper in the film "See the Sea" which was directed by François Ozon.

## *An Evil Intruder in a Family Paradise*

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By JANET MASLIN

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François Ozon's "See the Sea" is set at the Île d'Yeu, a French beach community, and filmed so precisely that it seems to observe every grain of sand. Discreetly terrifying in the way that only a tranquil, sunlit setting can be, the island is the backdrop for an insinuating two-character story. An Englishwoman named Sasha (Sasha Hails) is seen spending time in privileged isolation with her baby daughter, as the camera carefully records the simple rhythm of her days. Then a rude, sullen backpacker named Tatiana (Marina de Van) appears and announces her intention to camp in Sasha's yard. "See the Sea," which is brief and expertly chilling, watches an uneasy rapport develop between these two.

Sasha is wary at first, but she is also lonely and complacent enough to begin letting down her guard. She decides to share meals with Tatiana. She grows curious about Tatiana's red tent and, at one point, grows flirtatious enough to slip into a sundress that matches it. And she

flaunts her obvious love for the baby, an especially delicious-looking toddler. Either this child is a fabulous actress or she is Miss Hails's own daughter. She wails pitifully every time her screen mother walks away.

It's only a matter of time, and an occasion for profound alarm, before Sasha has grown oblivious enough to leave the baby in Tatiana's care. What happens next is not instantly horrific, but it draws out the deep fears that Mr. Ozon plays upon so exquisitely. In a film of such stark simplicity and visual elegance, the isolated hints of Tatiana's fury are as potent as gunfire. The camera's few minutes alone in the bathroom with her are reason enough for Sasha to be heading for the next ferry.

Mr. Ozon, whose eerie exactitude owes strong debts to Chabrol and Polanski, builds this simple film to unexpected heights of irony and horror. Late in the story, for instance, the two women share dinner as Tatiana abruptly asks Sasha what childbirth was like. In complacent yuppie fashion, Sasha proudly answers that she took no drugs because she wanted to experience the pain.

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### SEE THE SEA

Written (in French, with English subtitles) and directed by François Ozon; director of photography, Yorick le Saux; edited by Jeanne Moutard; music by Eric Neveux; produced by Marc Missonnier, Olivier Delbosc and Nicolas Brévière; released by Zeitgeist Films. Shown with a 15-minute short by Mr. Ozon, "A Summer Dress." Running time: 67 minutes. This film is not rated.

WITH: Sasha Hails (Sasha) and Marina de Van (Tatiana).

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All Tatiana has to do to set your hair on end at a moment like this is simply to listen, her expression perfectly blank, her eyes dead.

The profoundly unsettling "See the Sea," with its potent undercurrents of sexual frustration and longing, runs only 52 minutes but packs a feature-length wallop. "A Summer Dress," A 15-minute short by the same filmmaker uses a similar beach setting and similar visual style to vastly different purpose. This time, in the story of a gay man who is seduced by a woman and then vacillates between her and his male lover, the tactics are similar but the effect is far more light.