

SHORT FILMS

1978	Laurent Lammere, portier
1991	Rispondetemi, dans Montréal vu par... (Montreal Sextet)
1996	Lettre à ma fille

FEATURE FILMS

1980	Strass café
1984	La Femme de l'hôtel (A Woman in Waiting)
1986	Anne Trister
1988	A corps perdu (Straight for the Heart)
1991	La Demoiselle sauvage (Savage Woman)
1994	Mouvements du désir (Desire in Motion)
1999	Emporte-moi (Set Me Free)
2001	Lost and Delirious (Rebelles or La Rage au cœur)

DOCUMENTARIES

1990	Hotel Chronicles
1998	Gabrielle Roy

TV FILMS

1979	Série Planète (nine episodes)
1982	Eva en transit
1997	Femmes: une histoire inédite (Échos du futur-Postcard from the Future)
1997	Femmes: une histoire inédite (Le Tango des sexes-The Gender Tango)

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LEA POOL



From isolation to communication

F From Switzerland to Quebec, from feature films to documentaries, from introspection to baring all, in the space of twenty years Léa Pool has developed a cinematic universe whose evolution has been nourished by a remarkable coherence, both in its themes and its recurring images.

Assuming that there was a kinship with the cinema of Marguerite Duras from the very beginning, Léa Pool soon established an extremely coded world of her own, an interior space

whose domain is brought to the fore by the force of the symbolic vocabulary, the almost obsessional images of trains, harbours, hotels, ambulances: objects denoting exile, movement and the unknown. Later, inscribing herself in the line of Antonioni and Wenders, she gradually freed herself from their influences to create a cinema that is as carnal as it is spiritual, strongly marked by wandering, incommunicability, the search for identity, and urgency.

Oscillating between a dream world and a firm grip on reality, Léa Pool's film-making is a constant discourse on the creation of a work or of herself, the two being closely linked. In fact in her first three films, the central character is a creator: a film-maker in *A Woman in Waiting*, a painter in *Anne Trister*, a photographer in *Straight for the Heart*. Later on, even though the artist appears on the periphery (the failed writer in *Set me Free*, who is the father of the heroine), he/she is always present, until *Gabrielle Roy*, a film marking a turning point where the film-maker finds, by means of the documentary, a more generous, freer relationship with the world. By effacing herself behind the life and work of the famous Canadian woman of letters, the film-maker has the floor. As Léa Pool herself said, "I was liberated from language, because Gabrielle Roy spoke for me."

Whereas music, and that includes singing, occupies a primary role in the cinematographic work of Léa Pool, the films of her first period are very close to being silent films, words functioning only as an obligatory and chaotic passage towards the Other. The bodies do the speaking, and the language is above all visual. From *Set me Free* onwards, language is released, and a salutary fusion takes place between outer reality and the inner world.

Like a blurred photo that becomes clearer and clearer over the years, Léa Pool's universe becomes progressively more incarnate, always maintaining the same density, but with new lightness and precision. It's a rigorous journey for a film-maker who little by little has passed from isolation to communication, from expression of the non-spoken to expression pure and simple. The work of Léa Pool is the history of a film-maker who has brought herself into the world.

"The work of Léa Pool, a prolific film-maker, enlarges the spectrum of the Quebec cinema by combining the themes of wandering and the search for feminine identity."

Dictionnaire du cinéma québécois

PRINCIPAL PRIZES

La Femme de l'hôtel: Génie Prize for best actress (Louise Marleau) and best song (Touch Me); prize for best actress (Louise Marleau) at the Chicago Festival; prize for best Canadian film at the Toronto Festival; Public Award at the Créteil Festival of Films by Women

Anne Trister: Official competitor at the Berlin Festival; Génie Prize for best photography, best song; Public Award at the Créteil Festival of Films by Women

A corps perdu: Official competitor at the Festival of Venice

Hotel Chronicles: Gold Plaque at the Chicago Festival

La Demoiselle sauvage: Génie Prize for best music and best actor; prize for best photography at the Montreal World Film Festival, best Canadian film

Gabrielle Roy: Gémeaux Prize for best documentary; prize for best biography at the Banff Festival

Emporte-moi: Official competitor at the Berlin Festival; Special Ecumenical Jury Award at the Berlin Festival; prize for best screenplay (Léa Pool) at the Chicago Festival; Jutra Prize for best actress (Karine Vanasse), best supporting actress (Pascale Bussières), best artistic direction (Serge Bureau), and special prize to Léa Pool; prize for best actress (Karine Vanasse) at the Namur Festival; Swiss Film Prize 2000 for best feature film; prize for best Canadian film from the Toronto Film Critics Association; prize for best Canadian film, special mention to the film and to Karine Vanasse at the Toronto Festival; Youth Prize for the direction and to Karine Vanasse at the Festival of Valladolid

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Born 1960 in Paris, Eric Fourlanty emigrated to Canada in 1974, studied film-making in Montreal, edited the cinema section of *Voir* magazine from 1986 to 2000. In 1999 published a collection of short stories (*La Mort en friche*) and *Le Violon rouge*, a book of encounters and photos on the film of François Girard. Lives in Montreal.

TRANSLATION

John O'Brien, Basel

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Alphabet Primer

[...] Ambulance

When I arrived in Quebec, in North America, the sound of an ambulance struck me; it was not related to a personal memory. For me it's an image of the search for something deeper, further on, something between death and life. Whether it's heading for a hospital or a hotel, the ambulance is linked to urgency, to transition. It is an element of the unknown, injury, loss of autonomy, transformation. It is the passage from a state of suffering to what is in principle a state of healing.

[...] Blue

The colour of the Quebec winter. I've made nearly all my films in Montreal, always in winter. It's also a colour that can symbolise the lack of communication, of keeping your distance. It's a world that's emotionally cold but moving in the direction of greater warmth, awareness of one's body, of the other person. Little by little, people speak to each other and touch each other more, even if it's only to hit someone!

[...] Corporeality

At the end of my adolescence I had the impression that the body was like a social envelope, without any relation to what one is inside. It was impossible for me to reconcile the two. In my first films, there's a voice that says one thing and a body that says something else. To me the body is complex, but not tortured. I like forms and movements that are purified, stripped bare, essential, so as to extract the body from the everyday world, enabling it to regain a free space, without contingencies. Body language is what is the least directed. That's why I choose actors who can express what I have to say with their bodies.

[...] Desire

In all my films there is a space being two beings to be filled in. It is not a desire that can be achieved; it's always difficult or impossible. It produces a film space that's much too vast, so you film this desire that is always circulating. When you film two bodies making love, there has to be a space between them to allow light to pass through. My desire in film-making is to fill a vacuum. This is the essential feature of my creative work.

[...] Dreams

In practically all my films there are dreams, a moment where there's a level of consciousness other than reality. This is especially so in my first works, where I filmed the interior landscapes of people as much as their reality. The more I advance, the more they become flesh and blood. Before, my films imploded, now they explode!

> continuation 1**[...] Exile**

It's possible that exile to Quebec has led to a more questioning attitude than if I had remained in Switzerland. Exile is feeling oneself inadequate, not living in one's own space, experiencing a discrepancy between who you are and the image you project, and even between you and yourself. This state of exile is what interests me. Everybody is a bit exiled. The work to be done is to find the missing bridges and become as complete as possible. Basically it's belonging. That's what we wish for our children.

[...] Insanity

I'm not really interested in the frontier between sanity and insanity. What I portray is not a clinical insanity but the consequences of persons following something through to the very end. They slide towards very disturbed zones. At a given moment, I feel this fear that I could start sliding too, or that some of the people I'm close to might slide that way. At the same time, I'm fascinated by people who explore these zones of fragility.

[...] Island

An island like that of Montreal gives me a feeling of security, because it has a precise contour, it's a place that can be circumscribed. This is linked to problems of identity, of not knowing one's limits or frontiers. To define my personal space has been an extremely hard task.

[...] Intimacy

As a film-maker, I'm interested in those rare, precious moments. People spend a lot of time giving the impression of communicating. My films show above all human solitude, so that if there are encounters, I want them to be decisive. They're stolen moments; they never happen through words.

[...] Kibbutz

I'm the daughter of a survivor of the Holocaust, and at the age of 17 I went to a kibbutz during my first trip outside Switzerland. Jewishness is present in my films, but it is subadjacent. The themes of identity and exile tie in with Jewish concerns, and as I make very personal films, it would be difficult to eliminate that particular aspect. It's a part of my memory, my personality.

[...] Mother

The need to be seen and recognised by my mother is probably the motor of my creative work. This search for maternal love gradually moves into feminine love, the love of a woman, to a love that is a priori equal in *Lost and Delirious*, a love that no longer needs to pass via the mother or the maternal figure. A film isn't a form of therapy, but I have the impression that I have become able to love better and be more just in my relationship with my daughter, and with my mother as well. *Set me Free* is dedicated to them.

> continuation 2**[...] Narration**

For me there was no correspondence between a story told in images and sounds and one narrated by a text. I wasn't able to make my characters speak except by silence or a voice-off. I liked a certain kind of film that used the voice-off, so it gave me the desire to make my own films too.

[...] Port

A port, a home base – once you call it that, it becomes a bit reductive. To me, a train is a point of departure, a non-place, whereas a port is a place of anchorage, arrival, a harbour. It's the orderliness of a home, of belonging, of a successful outcome. We're really in a symbolic vocabulary here...

[...] Quebec

I've made almost all my films in Quebec, and I'm not sure that I would have been a creator if I had remained in Switzerland. It's an integral part of my personality. Even though it has diminished, this juncture between my Swiss origins and my life in Quebec will always endow me with a certain effortless originality, a different point of view. It would be the same if I returned to Switzerland.

[...] Switzerland

It's the country of my origins, my past. Many of my films are Swiss co-productions; Switzerland has become a partner in my creative activity. On the other hand, my films aren't rooted in a particular social or political reality. They have the texture of Quebec, and a European sensitivity. I've never defined myself by a country.

[...] Train

A train is a very cinematographic place. In my opinion it's not only a psychoanalytical value, but a very emotive one as well. Switzerland is a country of trains, and when I left, it was by train. That was where I tore myself away from my mother. It was the same with my father, I saw him for the last time standing on the platform. If I have something overwhelming to show, there will surely be a train. But I don't say to myself: "I've got it, I'm going to put in a train!" It's an unconscious part of my creative work.

[...] Urbanism

Montreal is a very inspiring place to film. I've always loved its run-down side, going down to the harbour, the abandoned factories. In *Savage Woman* Nature is there, but it's cut in two by a dam. Then *Gabrielle Roy* opened up great spaces for me. *Lost and Delirious* also applies to the forest, and my next film will be made in Costa Rica, in the middle of a tropical forest.




LEA POOL



> continuation 3

[...] Visual

As I had difficulty at the beginning to communicate my universe in words, I gave preference to the visual aspect. An image had to express the maximum by itself. My scenarios are always born of an image, a bit in the style of Duras. This reference has remained. What was satisfying in the film about *Gabrielle Roy* was that it managed to speak for me. It was an ideal encounter.

[...] Youth

All ages of life are represented in my films, but the child and the adolescent are the motors. My desire to make films has come from an adolescence that wouldn't end; it's a side of infancy that doesn't want to become adult. From film to film, I've reflected on characters between childhood and adolescence, until the moment comes when I decide to make a film about them.