

Script: Michel Langlois, Léa Pool,
Robert Gurik
Camera: Georges Dufaux
Editing: Michel Arcand
Sound: Serge Beauchemin

Music: Yves Lafférière
Cast: Louise Marleau, Paule Bail-
largeon, Marthe Turgeon, Serge
Dupire
Production: ACPAV

Léa Pool

A WOMAN IN WAITING



1984 | 35mm | colour | 89' | Original title: La Femme de l'hôtel

"Creation is also nourished by handicaps. My universe, expressing itself badly in words, is first expressed by images, then bodies and finally by music. When there are words, it's a standpoint about the film, a resonance chamber, another manner of speaking."

Léa Pool

Into a Quebec cinematography nurtured by the "cinéma direct" of the 1960s and 70s, *La Femme de l'hôtel* brought the fresh air of pure fiction, free from all social contingencies. After an 18-year absence from Montreal, a woman film director returns to film a story of a female singer slowly drifting into insanity. At the hotel where the crew is staying, the director meets a woman whose destiny seems to have inspired the one she has imagined for her heroine. A fragile friendship arises between the two women, where the reality of the one becomes closely entwined with the fiction of the other.

In a dreamlike atmosphere recalling that of *Last Year at Marienbad* – in a Nordic version bathed in bluish winter light – Léa Pool combs a feminine world marked by memory, inner exile and creation, and establishes a purified style, a play of mirrors between fiction and reality, reason and insanity, a film in the film and in the eye of the spectator. Of all these multiple levels of consciousness, which one is the most real?

Airy and secretive as a silent-film star, Louise Marleau embodies, with a remarkable sobriety, this "woman in waiting", who has seen it all. Beside her, Paule Baillargeon, playing the troubled film director, an earthling attracted by the void, and Marthe Turgeon, an actress playing her own life, take up the slack. Between these three poles, Léa Pool composes, decomposes and recomposes the portrait of a woman who is a prisoner of herself. "Touch me," says the theme of the film: one could not say it better.

Script: Léa Pool, Luc Caron
Camera: François Bouchard
Editing: Léa Pool
Sound: Pierre Grou

Music: Philippe Chevalier
Cast: Luc Caron, Céline Lacoste
Production: Les Productions Strass,
National Film Board

Léa Pool

STRASS CAFÉ



1980 | 16mm | colour | 62' | Original title: Strass Café

"I'm a Quebec film-maker, this is clear to me; I've made nearly all my films in Quebec by choice. When I arrived in Montreal in 1975, this search for a national identity by the people of Quebec was stimulating. It gave a meaning to my own questions." Léa Pool

Fully assuming her filiation with the director of *India Song*, Léa Pool sets the scene of her own universe, a phantom world where characters with indistinct identities wander around. There is talk about an encounter that you never see, and the city you do see evokes an imaginary place, even though it's completely banal.

A woman talks, alone. She speaks to us, to herself. Another woman is mute, also alone. Is it the same one? Perhaps. There's a man. Or is it a man? A city, night, a deserted bar. A couple is dancing a slow tango. It all resembles *Duras*, but it isn't.

If the images of this first feature film only resemble a shadow of the sharp look that Léa Pool will later take at the world, the narration, spoken by the film-maker herself, among others, possesses real assurance, to the point where it virtually constitutes an explanation of the text of the films to come, a starting point for the themes the director was to develop later on.

Script: Léa Pool, Marcel Beaulieu
Camera: Pierre Mignot
Editing: Michel Arcand
Sound: Richard Besse
Music: René Dupéré

Art direction: Vianney Gauthier
Cast: Albane Guilhe, Louise Marleau,
Guy Thauvette, Lucie Laurier
Production: Films Vision 4, National
Film Board

Léa Pool

ANNE TRISTER



1986 | 35mm | colour | 103' | Original title: Anne Trister

"It's an important part of my identity to have lived with a father who was stateless, completely out of step, who never found his anchorage. This is something I carry within me to a remarkable degree." Léa Pool

Carried by the aesthetics of the 1980s, *Anne Trister* is a poignant and melancholy film about the confusion of feelings and the initiatory path followed by a young woman in search of herself.

After the death of her father, a young Swiss painter leaves her lover and departs for Montreal, where she meets a woman who is a child psychologist. Somewhat fearful yet attracted by the unknown, she forms a friendship that becomes increasingly intense, troubled and disturbing.

After the phantom cities that are the setting for *Strass café* and *La Femme de l'hôtel*, this time Léa Pool anchors her story in Montréal, a place with devastated spaces where the young woman reconstructs herself, little by little. Filmed as never before, the Quebec metropolis is treated as a character in its own right, a moving reflection of the heroine's search for her identity.

Anne Trister is the rupture with childhood, the confrontation of a dreamed life with real life, a tentative approach to plural sexuality and an unequivocal affirmation of the visual power of Léa Pool's film-making. It is a spellbinding film, just like its superb theme song, "Je t'écris de la main gauche" by Danièle Messia.

Script: Léa Pool, Marcel Beaulieu,
inspired by Yves Navarre's *Kurwenal*
Camera: Pierre Mignot
Editing: Michel Arcand

Sound: Luc Yersin
Music: Osvaldo Montes
Art direction: Vianney Gauthier
Cast: Matthias Habich, Johanne-

Marie Tremblay, Michel Voïta, Jean-
François Pichette
Production: Les Films Téléscène,
Cinémaire, Xanadu Film

Léa Pool

STRAIGHT FOR THE HEART



1988 | 35mm | colour | 92' | Original title: A corps perdu

"In *Strass Café*, the woman narrator, talking about one of the characters, says, 'Neither man nor woman, with the heart of a child.' There's something of this in *Straight for the Heart*. My aim goes beyond biological identity. If one were to make a dissection of people, right down to what is most fundamental about them, I don't think there would be any great differences between men and women." Léa Pool

Taking her inspiration from the universe of Yves Navarre, Léa Pool here touches what are virtually the fundamental questions of her work: the masculine and the feminine; love in need of being reinvented: creative work, nourishing and tyrannical; insanity as an enlightener; the fundamental solitude of every human being and the need for communication.

Put to the test by a photo report made in Central America, a photographer returns to Montreal to find that the woman and man with whom he had been living for ten years have left him. Crushed, the traveller seeks to find them in a city that he rediscovers by photographing it. In the course of his wanderings through the city, he meets a young deaf-mute with whom he has a soothing relationship, but one that is inadequate to challenge his whole life.

Rarely has a menage à trois been shown with so much lucidity and clarity. Far from any provocation, tabloid vulgarity or – on the contrary – yielding to the temptation of a utopian view, Léa Pool films with a sorrowful precision the desire that circulates among three persons who can live neither together nor apart. An extremely dense film, *Straight for the Heart* is carried along by the lyricism of Osvaldo Montes' music and the strong yet fragile presence of Matthias Habich, an exceptional actor whom Léa Pool has described as embodying the masculine element that she carries within her.

Script: Léa Pool, Laurent Gagliardi,
Michel Langlois, from a short story by
Corinna Bille
Camera: Georges Dufaux
Editing: Alain Belhumeur

Sound: Dominique Chartrand, Alain
Belhumeur
Music: Jean Corriveau
Art direction: Vianney Gauthier

Cast: Patricia Tuslane, Matthias
Habich, Roger Jendly, Michel Voïta
Production: Cinémaginaire, Limbo
Films, National Film Board

Léa Pool

SAVAGE WOMAN



1991 | 35mm | colour | 100' | Original title: La demoiselle sauvage

"I've long wanted to prove that I'm capable of making images. In *Straight for the Heart* there was the photo, in *Anne Trister* the painting and in *Savage Woman* the dam. There has always been a visual element that I've depended on to make up for my fear of lacking something to say. You have to know how to let things take their course at a given moment. If you wish to control too much, you end up being controlled." Léa Pool

Marked by the desire of the film-maker to return to (make a film in) Switzerland, *Savage Woman* is the most minimalist of Léa Pool's films, a painting, stripped to the point of asceticism, of a woman who is a prisoner of herself.

Covered with blood, a young woman runs through a deserted village before fleeing into the mountains. After wandering around for several days, she falls down exhausted at the foot of a dam. An engineer who is stationed there for the summer takes her to safety and cares for her, but the fleeing woman is wanted by the police, and the noose tightens around this strange and isolated couple.

More than in the characters, who are more symbolic than corporeal, or in the intrigue, a light suspense that the film-maker hardly exploits, the heart of the *Savage Woman* is to be found in this phantasmal place represented by the dam itself, lying like an open wound between earth and sky. This concrete wall that bleeds the Swiss mountain and forms an artificial lake reflecting the raw sky is so imposing that its unreal mass crushes any attempt to escape it. The fiction suffers because of it, but the effect is gripping: never has Léa Pool gone so far into symbolism, evacuating nearly all psychology, giving a mythological dimension to this story of impossible love.

Script: Léa Pool
Camera: Pierre Mignot
Editing: Michel Arcand
Sound: François Musy
Music: Zbigniew Preisner
Art direction: Serge Bureau

Cast: Valérie Kaprisky, Jean-François Pichette, Jolianne L'Allier-Matteau, William Jacques
Production: Cinémaginaire, National Film Board, Catpics Productions

Léa Pool

DESIRE IN MOTION



1994 | 35mm | colour | 104' | Original title: Mouvements du désir

"Léa Pool trusts our understanding of the character and the screenplay. The field is quite wide, but when you emerge from it, she very gently brings us back again. She directs the actors in a very supple and very precise manner." Jean-François Pichette

Filmed entirely in a train connecting the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Canada, *Desire in Motion* is nevertheless not a straightforward film. First entitled *L'Instant amoureux*, it is a meticulous, almost entomological exploration of the hesitation waltz provoked by first looks, those first flutters of emotion.

The woman is a musician, the man a computer scientist, the former French, the latter a Quebecois. She is leaving Montreal and an impossible love affair, accompanied by her daughter; he is travelling to Vancouver to join his girlfriend. In a train connecting one sea to the other, a man and a woman trace a hyphen linking two solitudes, an open parenthesis that will give this obscure object of desire and the steadily growing feelings of pleasure more than their due.

In this motionless journey to the heart of the emotion of love, it is the countryside that is moving. The protagonists for their part live suspended in the cocoon of the train, totally concentrated on the least quivers of their inner emotions. Far from isolating the two characters, Léa Pool surrounds them with a human microcosm where all ages of life are represented. Paradoxically, it is the very fact of confining her story within a closed space that makes us feel the film-maker's opening out on the world, an attitude that will be further refined in the films to follow.

Script: Léa Pool
Camera: Jeanne Lapoirie
Editing: Michel Arcand
Sound: Christian Monheim
Music: various

Art direction: Serge Bureau
Cast: Karine Vanasse, Pascale Bussières, Miki Manojlovic, Nancy Huston

Production: Lorraine Richard, Carole Scotta, Alfi Sinniger. Cité-Amérique, Haut et Court, Catpics Productions

Léa Pool

SET ME FREE



1999 | 35mm | colour | 94' | Original title: Emporte-moi

"Transposing this childhood to another place, with actors who speak differently from my family, made the film fictional; it was no longer me, but the life of those characters. They had a life of their own." Léa Pool

It's 1963, and Hannah, 13, lives in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Montreal with her elder brother and accomplice. Her father, a tormented writer, is a stateless Jew, and her mother a fragile young Quebecoise who is the financial support of the family. Touchy and forthright, the young girl explores the world, first through cinema, where she sees Godard's *Vivre sa vie*; at school, with the support of her teacher, who looks like Anna Karina's double; and through the disturbing friendship she forms with a girl her own age.

More an inner chronicle than the x-ray of an era, *Set me Free* is still today Léa Pool's most accessible, down-to-earth and generous film. By openly drawing on her own childhood memories, the film-maker leaves aside the formalism marking her first films to engage herself more closely with the tribulations of her young heroine.

Whether it's the shifting identities, social or sexual; the human relationships tensed between confrontation and tenderness; the exile that is interior (the young girl's) or geographic (the father's); or the inner wounds that shape the protagonists and set off the action: *Set me Free* is a true Léa Pool film, but we feel a new assurance in her gaze on her universe: grave and tender in purpose, light and assured in form, for a film-maker in constant evolution *Set me Free* is a film of maturity.

Script: Judith Thompson, after *The Wives of Bath*, by Susan Swan
Camera: Pierre Gill
Editing: Gaétan Huot
Sound: Claude Beaugrand

Music: Yves Chamberland
Art direction: Serge Bureau
Cast: Piper Perabo, Jessica Paré, Mischa Barton, Jackie Burroughs
Production: Cité-Amérique

Léa Pool



LOST AND DELIRIOUS

| 2001 | 35mm | colour | 100' | Original title: Rebelles ou La rage au cœur

"For me, film-making is becoming more like play. There will always be a certain seriousness, but it's no longer the centre. Before, I used to put my life on the line in every film; there was a desire to be up to it, to be loved. Now, I want to tell a story, and have pleasure in doing it." Léa

Pool

Filming for the first time, in English, a scenario she did not write, Léa Pool has made *Lost and Delirious* an ode to absolute love, a film that has the audacities and errant behaviour of the adolescence it describes.

Three years after losing her mother, an adolescent girls returns to her boarding school, where she shares a room with a girl from a good family and a rebellious orphan girl, who love each other before the at first incredulous, then knowing, eyes of the new arrival. When their liaison is discovered, there is a scandal. The first girl denies everything, throwing herself into the arms of a boy, while the other girl, crazed with pain, tries to win her back.

On this seemingly rosewater canvas, the film-maker paints a portrait of an age, making no concessions and taking up, for the first time head-on, the fact of feminine homosexuality. Here again, one feels a new assurance that no longer has the need to prove itself. After the turn that started with *Set me Free*, Léa Pool moves ahead in a more accessible vein, giving full rein to intrigue and obtaining exceptional performances from the young actresses.