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H.

Rania Attieh, Daniel Garcia

Producer Ivan Eibuszyc, Pierce Varous, Rania Attieh, Daniel Garcia, Shruti Rya Ganguly, Matthew Thurm. **Production companies** Enpassant (Brooklyn, USA); Nice Dissolve (Brooklyn, USA); Frutacine (Buenos Aires, Argentina). **Director** Rania Attieh, Daniel Garcia. **Screenplay** Rania Attieh, Daniel Garcia. **Director of photography** Daniel Garcia. **Production design** Rania Royo Barrera. **Costume** Romina Prandoni. **Make-up** L. Bates Jaffe. **Sound** Javier Farina. **Music** Kazu Makino, Alex Weston, Daniel Garcia, Jesse Gelaznik. **Sound design** Javier Farina. **Editor** Rania Attieh, Daniel Garcia.

Cast Robin Bartlett (Helen), Rebecca Dayan (Helen), Will Janowitz (Alex), Julian Gamble (Roy), Roger Robinson (Harold).

DCP, colour. 97 min. English.

Premiere 25 January 2015, Sundance Film Festival

World sales Film Sales Company

Two women named Helen live in Troy, New York. While one Helen is around sixty, married to Roy and looks after an uncannily lifelike baby doll as if it were a real child, the other makes up one half of a successful artist duo with her boyfriend Alex. She is also pregnant. Over four chapters, we are introduced to their lives, which are changed forever by a mysterious event: after being presaged by a series of disconcerting omens, a meteorite hits the city. People disappear and eerie things begin to happen.

It's more than just the names of the protagonists and the location that allude to Greek mythology and the story of Helen of Troy in this film. Without retelling them in literal fashion, *H.* positively teams with complex references to Greek legends. It is the playful use of fragments of myth and the sense of the superhuman and inexplicable found in the tales of the gods that create the film's subtly disturbing atmosphere, which also unobtrusively draws on fantasy and disaster film conventions. What makes *H.* so modern is less its contemporary reworking of legend than its pioneering revival of myth as a narrative form.

Anna Hoffmann

The crucial moment

H. is a film about change. But more importantly, it's about being changed, and being changed by grand forces outside of one's own control. For us, this is one of the hallmarks of Tragedy, and this is ultimately what we feel *H.* is – a modern Tragedy, one that flirts with the conventions and mutterings of science fiction. But what do tragedies prepare us for? What do they warn us of? With *H.*, we aimed to have our characters exist simply as players on a proverbial stage, each unknowingly waiting for their eventual, and inevitable, brush with change, each equally unable to avoid their fates. Overall, many of the narrative elements in *H.* are loosely based on real-life events that we happened to come across either in research or as simple, everyday Internet whimsy – events that share the same overall absurdity that sometimes is present in normal life, which, when crafted together form an intricate tapestry of fiction. Everything from the meteor explosion, the 'Reborn doll' culture, the large Greek statue head that floats down the Hudson River – these were all based on real-life events that seem to stretch the imagination, so to speak. *H.* is also infused with ideas that deal with the motherhood of women at different ages, their relationship with their babies versus their partner's, their overall 'need' to have children, the fears and projections they develop in regard to their children, etc. All of this we put into a pot, if you will, and simmered it for a while until we had what made sense to us. *H.* is a tale that is maybe both ancient and modern.

Rania Attieh, Daniel Garcia

A tour-de-force in the pressure cooker

The evolution of *H.* as an actual film came about in a whirlwind of non-stop madness. The film was made as part of Venice Biennale College-Cinema Programme, which selected three films to receive a micro-budget production grant, mentorship and a special screening during the Venice Film Festival. While amazing, what this meant is that we basically had to make a film in well under a year to make the Venice August deadline. We have, quite literally, never worked so intensely for such a sustained period of time, and it was brilliant but utterly exhausting. We've made other films that would not have been such a stretch at this timeline, but *H.* is a very different film for us, with many more moving parts and much greater ambition. We had horses and crowds and forest days in a foot of snow (it was the worst winter ever), and a post production tour-de-force that included travel to Argentina (from Brooklyn) for VFX work and a rather complicated sound design and mix, not to mention a tonne of scoring from four different composers that were scattered all over the world – all having to come together just four months after shooting. Granted, after Venice, we've gained the time to go back and tinker here and there with elements that were perhaps a bit rushed, but the film was by and large made in a pressure cooker of bitter cold, sleepless nights, and not enough days.

Rania Attieh, Daniel Garcia



Rania Attieh was born in Tripoli, Lebanon. She studied Media Art Production at City College of New York. Along with Daniel Garcia, she has been involved in making several films as screenwriter, director, editor and producer. Their films have screened at museums and film festivals around the world. Rania Attieh is also an adjunct professor of Film Aesthetics at New York University's Tisch Graduate School of the Arts.

Films

2007: *Almost, Brooklyn* (Co-director: Daniel Garcia, 14 min.). 2009: *Tripoli, Quiet* (Co-director: Daniel Garcia, 15 min.). 2011: *Short Scenes from a Long Marriage* (Co-director: Daniel Garcia, 12 min.). 2011: *Tayeb, Khalas, Yalla/Ok, Enough, Goodbye* (Co-director: Daniel Garcia, 95 min.). 2014: *Recommended by Enrique* (Co-director: Daniel Garcia, 85 min.). 2015: *H.*



Daniel Garcia was born in Texas, United States. He studied philosophy before earning a degree in Film from New York University's Tisch Graduate School of the Arts. Along with Rania Attieh, he has been involved in making several films as screenwriter, director, editor and producer. Their films have screened at museums and film festivals around the world. Daniel Garcia is also a musician and composer. He lives and works in New York.

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