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Occidental

Neïl Beloufa

Producer Jacques Dodart, Hugo Jeuffrault, Pierre Malachin.
Production companies Bad Manners (Montreuil, France).
Written and directed by Neïl Beloufa. **Director of photography** Guillaume Le Grontec. **Editor** Ermanno Corrado. **Music** Grégoire Bourdeil, Alexandre Geindre. **Sound design** Arno Ledoux. **Sound** Arno Ledoux, François Bailly. **Production design** Dan Perez.
With Idir Chender (Antonio), Anna Ivacheff (Diana), Paul Hamy (Giorgio), Louise Orry-Diquero (Romy), Hamza Meziani (Khaled), Brahim Tekfa (Karim).

Colour. 73 min. French.

Premiere January 23, 2017, Festival premiers plans d'Angers

World sales MPM Film

The mood is heated. Demonstrations are taking place across France, also in front of the Paris hotel where an Italian named Giorgio is booking the bridal suite for him and his boyfriend Antonio. Hotel manager Diana doesn't trust them and calls the police to get rid of the odd couple. Italians? Homosexuals? Criminals? In the charged atmosphere of the Hotel Occidental, little is needed for initial suspicions to be aroused. While street battles rage outside and a politician tries to play down the situation in a TV interview, everyone inside attempts to turn things to their own advantage. This leads to faith in the security camera, absurd dialogues and mad conclusions, fainting spells and an explosive showdown complete with fervent gestures. The music provides the suspense, aside from the schmaltzy Italian love song. Art prints comment on the action, referencing the history of civilisation from Napoleon's military campaigns to Warhol's banana. The 70s look of the lobby, which evokes the set of a boulevard play, turns out to be the setting for a comedy shaped by the current social climate. Everything is fake here, including love. Or is it?

Birgit Kohler

The remains of 'imperial tourism'

Occidental is a project I'd had in mind for a long time. I heard a story in a hotel that fascinated me. It was about robbers that a hotel manager had no proof against besides an empty suitcase. I had, then, the desire to use hotels as an artefact of 'imperial tourism'. They are also the places where the world mixes. So the idea came to try to create a micro-geopolitical world inside a hotel. And during this time of populists and identity crises, the word 'western' was appearing a lot in newspapers. So we mashed together every 'weird' ideology from mainstream media (homophobia, racism, identity politics, communitarianism...) and used them as a dramatic trigger.

We wanted the viewer to have an open relationship to the film's genre – it's a comedy, a thriller, a Western, a social drama, and in the meantime none of these – in order to produce an open-ended meaning that allows a certain distance to the movie. That effect is underlined by a loose story, fake scenery, and a non-cathartic style of acting.

Our hope is that the movie prevents us from taking sides or using morality as a reading grid and that it doesn't advocate any single ideology. We don't want *Occidental* to reproduce the system it's attempting to take a critical distance from.

Neil Beloufa



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Neil Beloufa was born in Paris in 1985. Between 2007 and 2010, he studied at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts and the École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs, both in Paris; at California Institute of the Arts in Valencia; Cooper Union in New York; and at Fresnoy – Studio national des arts contemporains in Tourcoing, France. Neil Beloufa lives in

Paris, where he works as an artist and director. *Occidental* is his second full-length film.

Films

2007: *Kempinski* (14 min.). 2010: *Brune Renault* (18 min.), *Sans titre* (15 min.). 2012: *Party Island* (8 min.), *Real Estate* (11 min.), *World Domination* (28 min.). 2013: *Tonight and the People* (80 min.). 2014: *Desire for Data* (48 min.). 2017: *Occidental*.