

# PORTRAIT OF A LADY ON FIRE

2h 1min // France // French | Italian



## SYNOPSIS

This 'gorgeous' (Variety) and 'mesmerising' (Filmuforia) film is set in 18th century Brittany, where a noblewoman (Valeria Golino) engages a young artist, Marianne (Noémie Merlant), to paint a portrait of her daughter, Héloïse (Adèle Haenel). It is through the portrait that the Countess hopes to introduce Héloïse to a wealthy husband in Italy.

## MORE ABOUT THE FILM...

Film notes from FilmBath Festival 2019 by Sue Evans

Writer/director Céline Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* wowed critics at this year's Cannes Film Festival, winning the Best Screenplay award and the Queer Palm, an independent prize for LGBT films. Sciamma set out to create a lesbian love story free of the male gaze. 'She thought of how the male gaze has always been representing lesbian love stories as conflictual and tragic,' writes Sheena Scott at Forbes, 'and she decided that such films should now be portrayed from a female point of view.' During her Screen Talk at the London Film Festival, Sciamma explained she 'really wanted to film desire, the rise of desire. When you remember what it was like to fall in love, you remember the choreography. You remember the steps that led you to that kiss.'

The quiet rhythm of the film was something Sciamma decided on as she was writing the script. She told High On Films that she 'wanted to make music a part of the characters' lives, as a rare, desired, precious, unavailable thing.' Héloïse loves music but has never heard an orchestra. Her soundscape is the wind and waves outside, and only the crackle of a fire, a sigh, or the swish of a dress inside, so when the moments of music do occur we understand they are an occasion for joy.

The slow-burn erotic tension in the film is stoked by the central performances of Merlant and Haenel. Merlant was previously nominated for Most Promising Actress at both the César and Lumière awards for *Heaven Will Wait* (2016), while Haenel has been nominated for six Césars, winning for *Suzanne* (2013) and *Love at First Fight* (2014). Sciamma's films have won awards at film festivals around the world, including Cannes, Berlin, Stockholm, Buenos Aires, and Melbourne. She is a founder signatory to 50/50x2020, a French movement with the mission to improve gender equality in the film industry.

## CAST

CHARACTER	ACTOR
Marianne	Noémie Merlant
Héloïse	Adèle Haenel
Sophie	Luàna Bajrami
La Comtesse	Valeria Golino

## CREW

Director	Céline Sciamma
Screenplay	Céline Sciamma
Cinematography	Claire Mathon

## BOOKING

Distributor	Curzon
Non-theatrical bookings: Troy Film Agency troyfilmagency@btinternet BFI bookings.films@bfi.org.uk	
Available:	8th June 2020

