



DAUGHTER

Everyone is a moon, and has a dark side which he never shows to anybody.

- Mark Twain



on the run

from the cult that brought her to life, a young woman tries to understand her murderous impulses as her body undergoes grotesque metamorphoses.

Genre: horror

Language: French

Run time: 90 minutes

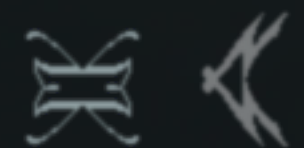


Marie has never seen the world outside her room in an old hotel. Ever since she hatched 16 years ago, her foster parents have hidden her from everything, including the cult that bred her.

As Marie approaches adulthood, her human traits become more pronounced but she senses she's not like her human parents. As the children of the cult die off from a mysterious disease, Marie is the sole female to continue the species. Her father anticipates the danger of his daughter's future as a breeder should the cult find her, and goes into hiding with his daughter. His hope: disguise her as completely human. Maybe she'll stand a chance to live a normal and happy life.

Marie sees the world for the first time. As she develops the curiosities and longings of a human teenager, she breaks her father's rules. Still, she struggles with her two conflicting physical realities. As lives are lost with her recklessness, her father questions his initial choices.

The cult aggressively close in with their hope for survival. Cornered, Marie escapes down her own risky path, subverting the challenges to her autonomy.



mood

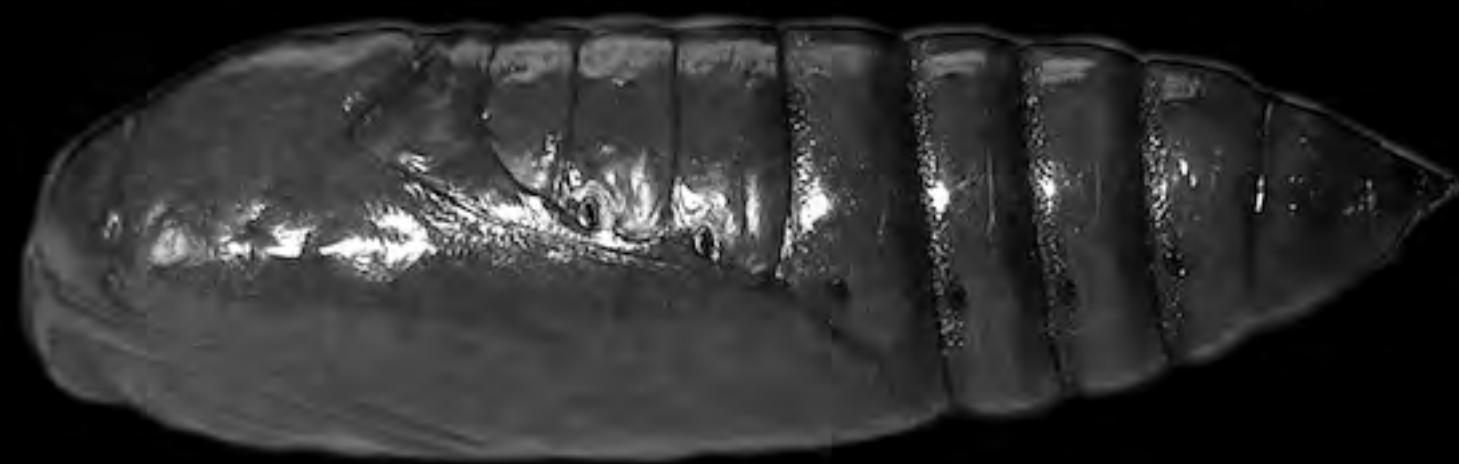








Locations Dinant, Belgium





exteriors

Dinant is a small town in southern Belgium in the region of Wallonia.

This location reflects visual and thematic contrasts in the story. As the birthplace of the saxophone (and proud of it), it has a whimsical presence combined with inviting Old World European charm. Underneath this beauty are the hard economic realities and the imposing presence of nature. The damp climate supports a dense forest that almost suffocates buildings, showing the age-old struggle between humankind and nature, a central idea of *Daughter*.







interiors

Marie's parents run a small hotel in the heart of Dinant that serves summer tourists. It's a simple place that has allowed the couple to disguise their own allegiance and addictions to the moth congregation.

The hotel is full of passageways and locked rooms, one which has been Marie's bedroom for sixteen years. Here, she hatched from an egg, ate as a caterpillar, and is close to starting her cocoon.

These are photos from the actual location, a hotel in Dinant built in the 1930s that closed in the '90s. It is currently undergoing repairs.



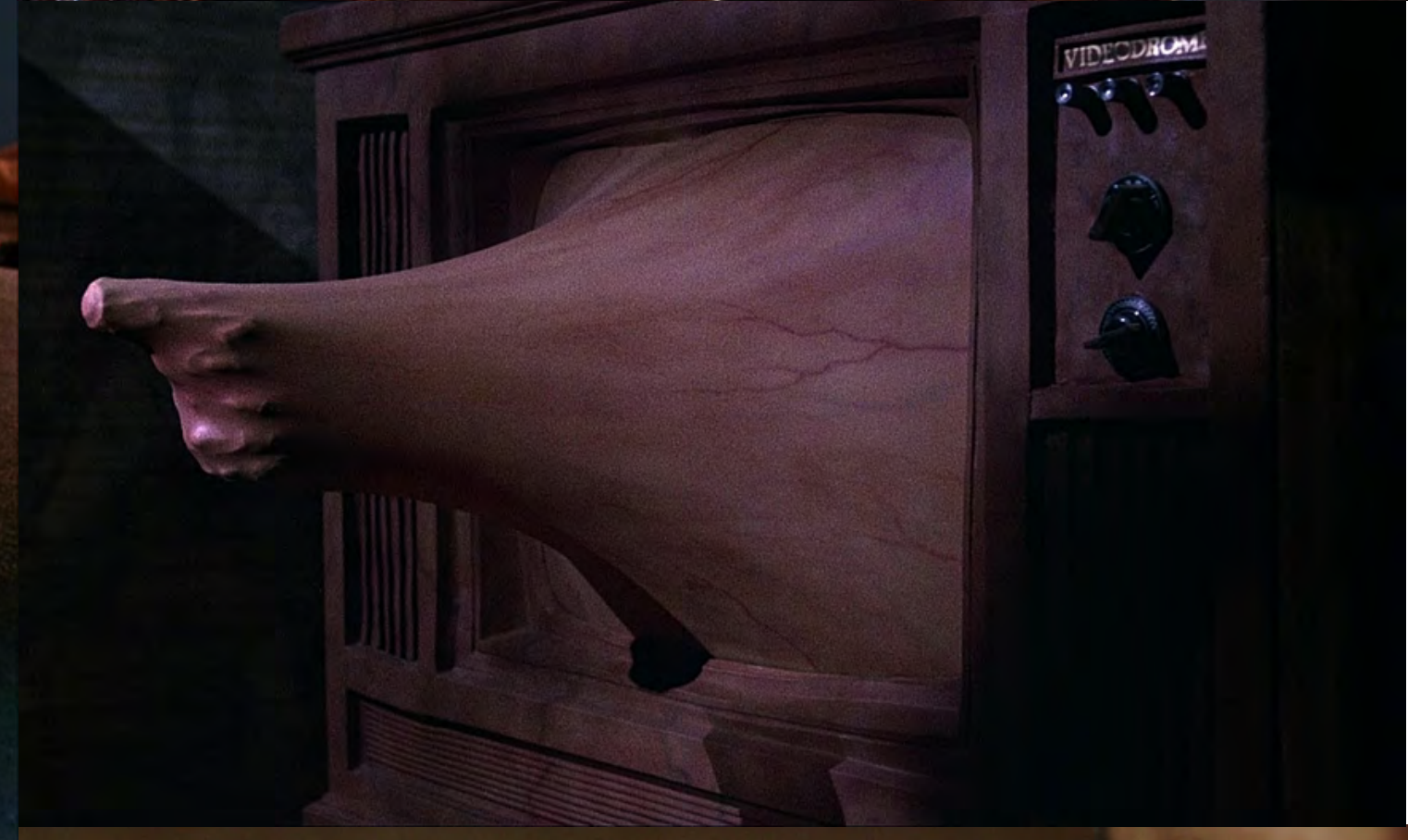
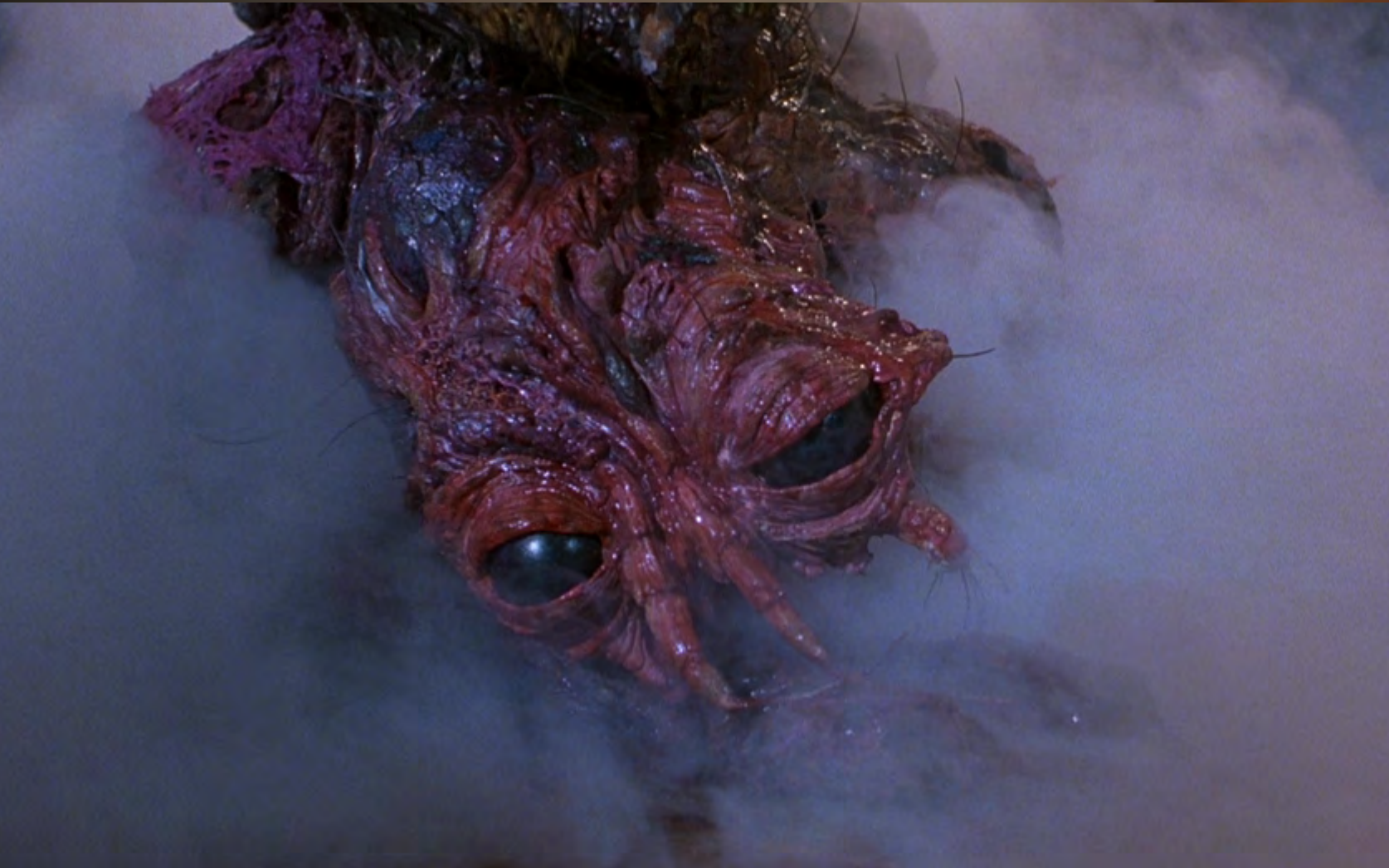


themes

Daughter is a **science-based body horror film** set in the modern day. It explores some of today's most pressing issues: the erosion of women's civil rights, the biodiversity crisis, and human attraction to dangerous cult mentalities.

Inspired by the work of filmmakers Julia Ducournau and David Cronenberg, and photographer Desiree Dolron, the film centers these conflicts within the body as an experience that isn't always private or something we can control. But the body is not just a political battleground or an expression of ideologies, it's also a source of pain and pleasure at its most basic level. Despite our best efforts, our bodies are things we cannot completely alter as we wish. If it isn't the world getting in the way, it is our genes.







directors' approaches

NICOLE ELMER

In my experience as a science communicator, I am constantly fascinated with the bizarre and beautiful ways species have evolved for the purpose of survival. My interest in social insect behavior and parasitism has inspired the character of Marie and her unique experience as both an insect and a girl entering womanhood.

I have found as much fascination with the human body. From birth, to puberty, to adulthood, then finally into our deaths, our physical changes through these stages can be thought of as a type of body horror. We experience them privately as well socially, and are almost always something we desperately wish to control.

Visually, Jorge and I express these ideas through unabashed photography of the human and insect body, through the self-mutilation practice by members of the moth congregation, insect metamorphosis, and Marie's own graphic physical changes.

JORGE SERMINI

How far would we go as parents to protect our children? What sacrifices would we be willing to make and where would we draw the line? As a father of a young woman, under what circumstances would I break every law to give her an advantage? These are questions that Marie's father, Bernard, faces as he tries to protect her. As he becomes challenged by Marie's increasingly dangerous behavior and changes, Bernard finds himself torn between his love for his child and his moral limits to that love.

For the film's visual approach, Nicole and I look to moth behavior, specifically their relationship to light. Moths are nocturnal and attracted to light to aid their navigation. For Bernard and Marie, they flee during the night hours but hide indoors during the day. Bernard tries his best to assist Marie's trouble with urban light pollution, as well as other environmental threats. For these contrasts, we will play with the light and darkness of *Chiaroscuro*. The film *Persona* by Ingmar Bergman is a good reference, with natural light patching the dark interiors, and serving as emotional metaphors for the characters.

TEAM



JORGE SERMINI (LITHUANIA) NICOLE ELMER (US) (CO-DIRECTORS/WRITERS)

Jorge's and Nicole's projects have been selected in the Frontières/Fantasia Co-Production Market (2020), NALIP Latino Media Market (2020), as a semifinalist in Slamdance Screenwriting Competition (2019), the Cine Qua Non Lab Story Lines and Script Revisions Labs (both in 2021), as well as second round selection of the Sundance Development Track (2015, 2016, and 2019). Their most recent period horror project, *The Shepherd*, is in early financing with Raven Banner and Hangar 18 Media (Canada).

Jorge is a professional editor with a specialty in VR. He has shot operas for Bayerische Staatsoper and Opera Köln in Germany. He has also produced three independent features: *In the Shadow*, *What's the Use?*, and *The Transcendents*. Jorge is also a 2020 NALIP Fellow.



Nicole is a Hispanic Scholar Fund Fellow, studied acting at New York University (Tisch School of the Arts) and film production at the University of Texas at Austin. Nicole's prose has been published in journals such as *Sweet Jane*, *Southern Hum*, and her play: *Fruit never falls when ripe* received second prize for the University of California Irvine Playwriting Competition. Nicole is also a science communicator, passionate about biodiversity and ecological conservation.



KRISTIAN VAN DER HEYDEN PRODUCER (BELGIUM)

Kristian started Harald House Belgium in 2016 after living and working in Los Angeles as writer/producer and actor for eight years. He produced *A Punk Daydream* (2019) by Jimmy Hendrickx, a documentary on street punk in Indonesia, which premiered at Rotterdam Film Festival in 2019 and is co-produced by broadcaster CANVAS. *Slave Island* (2022) is his third feature documentary in production. He also works on series and features in development and co-productions. His focus is on darker stories that deal with dysfunctional people, societies or institutions, in any genre. Kristian was honored as an Emerging Producer by the Ji-Hlava film festival for 2022.



MARIEL BAQUEIRO DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY (MEXICO, GERMANY)

Mariel studied film at the San Francisco Art Institute (U.S.A.) and CUEC (University Center for Film Studies-México). She holds a degree as a Director of Photography from DFFB (German TV and Film Academy Berlin). Her graduation film *Hagazussa* screened at festivals including BFI London and Sitges Film Festival, won the best cinematography award at Cineapocalypse Chicago, Diagonale Festival Austria, and was awarded with the Michael Ballhaus Prize (2018). She's also involved in productions with ARTE, Piano, Fidelio Films and Varios Lobos among others. She's a co-founder of Retina Fabrik Filmproduktion together with Lukas Feigelfeld. Member of the Cinematographinnen Network and a member of the Deutsche Filmakademie. In 2021, she became part of the Mexican Society of Cinematographers (AMC).



GENRE: Horror
LOCATION: Dinant, Belgium
TIME PERIOD: Present day
TOTAL RUN TIME: 90 minutes
LANGUAGE: French
BUDGET: \$1-\$3 million
STATUS: Early development

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Photo credits: Desiree Dolron, Sarah Gillespie

