



Presented at the Closing Day of the Montreal International Black Film Festival (FIFBM) the short film "C'est Moi" not to be missed! Directed by the Canadian Howard J. Davis - complete artist (director, photographer, composer but also performer ...) - the film plunges us into the heart of Montreal and reminds us that Quebec has also experienced its dark hours.



# C'est moi

## Requiem for Angélique by Howard J. Davis

**C'**est moi retraces a little mediatized event that has yet marked the black history of New France. Montreal, 1734. Marie-Joseph Angélique is accused of having set fire to her mistress's house. The spread of fire affects the merchant district of the time (now Old Montreal) and the young slave is carried responsibly. Guilty or not, she appeared in court and was sentenced to have her hands cut off and burned alive. While the Court of Appeal revises its decision, Angélique is subjected to the question and ends up yielding under torture.

A sinner or martyr, Angélique is led in front of the Notre-Dame Basilica where she is forced to confess her crime and dragged to the public square to be hanged and burned.

### A powerful and pure commemoration

The short film opens with a magnificent sequence, where from one shot to another, the camera freezes the scene of the crime, offering a nocturnal retrospective of the most beautiful monuments and mythical places of Old Montreal. The viewer plunges into the heart of this story where the show is also the killing of humanity and the celebration of atrocity. But violence is not a form that Howard J. Davis exploits in his short film. This is precisely the beauty of this "filmic experiment". In the space of 9 minutes, the director proposes a fresco at once chimerical and poetic appealing to the collective memory.

By situating his film in Montreal 2017,

Howard J. Davis puts the past and the present in tension. A position that goes beyond the tribute invites the viewer to reflect on a not so distant past. Throughout the film, we follow the footsteps of this anachronistic Angélique (Jenny Brizard) who, dressed in one of those big white dresses of the time, walks. She walks barefoot on the gray slab that one imagines cold from the forecourt of the Basilica. Then, under the questioning glances of 21st-century tourists who fix it as a curiosity, it stops. The spectator then becomes a witness among the observers. She then speaks and addresses the Virgin Mary who sits on the facade of the Basilica. Angélique asks for forgiveness. To God, to the King, but also to the people. Then, as if reliving her last moments, she turns her back to face the viewer. Face the world Like a martyr, her gaze lowered as a sign of forgiveness, in the image of the Virgin in the background, she collects herself and blends into the stone.

Then she leads us in her procession of Our Lady to the green fields. Still advancing, she walks and delivers a message which in the musical colors of the piano that accompanies it resonates in our ears like a "lullaby" (Howard J. Davis). What music-ment sounds simple, in appearance is power. If the realization and the game are to be welcomed, the photo-graph is excellent. The work of color contrasts, close-ups, transitions and superimpositions give meaning to this hymn to freedom.

### « C'est moi. Her History : Our History »

C'est Moi revives the past and inserts it into the present. Beyond a simple tribute to this woman and her story, the message of the film is also that of memory and freedom. This poetic story resurfaces the strong theme of racial discrimination. And not without reason. Because in the last minutes of his film, the realizer transports us Place Vauquelin where from 1989 is engraved in stone the Declaration on the elimination of racial discrimination. Still under renovation at the time of filming, Place Vauquelin is completely redesigned for the 375th anniversary of the city of Montreal. Brand new now, what happened to the commemorative plaque that is no longer there? Forgotten, withdrawn or out of place ... we can not find it anywhere.

Funny decision to celebrate the anniversary of a city that has one of its most cherished values of multicultural equality.

### The epitaph by Howard J. Davis

« C'est moi » mark the passage but also the moment. Howard J. Davis is the magician who in a poetic movement fuses past and present. His film is far from being an indictment. On the contrary, the director invites to the discussion. "Debate allows dialogue, opinions stifle it" With his film Howard J. Davis reminds us of the current value of this story, "our history" and invites us to move forward without forgetting. •

