

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Firstly, in terms of the film's images, my main objective is to allow the viewer to feel how Lila might feel, in particular with how she dresses. This style of dress hasn't been imposed on her, and yet she wears it with conviction, despite her family's disapproval and the scornful reactions she has to deal with everyday. I picture Lila feeling sublime when she wears her jilbab, like a misunderstood modern Madonna searching for a type of absolute purity. I want to emphasise her facial expressions, the sobriety and severity of her outfit, giving her a kind of fierce charisma. Lila can sense other people's reactions when they look at her, which she rejects consciously or not.

Lila embodies passion and ardour; she wants to forge her own destiny. She's human, in all its contradictions. Therefore, similar to Andrea Arnold's aesthetic, I want to adopt a cinematic frame of reference which perfectly aligns the character and the landscape, while maintaining a visual intimacy with Lila. The frame will show Lila's world from her point of view, inciting the viewer's curiosity: what's going on in Lila's head?

The camera angles and lighting will always try to reflect Lila's intimate feelings; her interior landscape, her relationship to her body, her relationship to others, her sensitivity, her emotions, and her reactions.

Lila could be that girl who passed us on the street, maybe we glimpsed her from afar, maybe it sparked a discussion. But here, she's no longer a sociological statistic, nor the center of a political debate that effaces her individuality. We are close to her, intimate with her, in her own skin.

Thus, the camera will always aim to capture what Lila attempts to conceal. The camera's act of revealing contrasts the body which is enveloped and hidden, but which remains a body of desire—she desires and is desired, despite herself.

In the scenes where Lila is getting dressed and undressed, the camera will highlight the colours and textures of the fabrics meant to conceal her, but in fact the fabric makes Lila ultra-visible—almost regal—because of her timeless style.

In order to capture what Lila hears, the soundscape will emphasise the jilbab moving around the body, the whooshing sounds of the ample fabrics. For her, there is a lushness in the act of getting dressed; she transforms the simple gesture into an intimate and almost solemn ritual.

Like a musical score, the staging and editing will play on a variety of instantaneous impressions according to the action and narrative. When Lila prays, hugs her mother, or does her ablutions, the staging will evoke a softness and internal fragility. The football scene or the scooter rides will emphasise speed, assertiveness, and dynamism. The family scenes around the table will be choreographed with precision in sequence shots to echo their domestic reality: their dialogues, the characters who come in and out of the room, their shouts from across the room, their glances, their averted gazes, when they stand up, sit down, cook meals, or clear the table.

Throughout the film in general, especially in outdoor scenes with movement, the visual composition will draw attention to the space and distance the characters occupy. To challenge the stereotypes both of Lila's character and the city itself, I want Brest to be a subtle presence in the backdrop. It's a modern city with typical post-war architecture—more American than Stalinist—which gives the urban landscape a certain charm; wide open streets, beautiful perspectives, and a very particular light. There are also places with particular cinematographic potential, such as the docks at the commercial port or the military port, both emblematic of Brest, with their cranes, silos, tankers, and abandoned warehouses. Filming Lila in Brest as any other women in the city will help challenge the standard gaze, presenting another way of perceiving and representing the city itself.

This cityscape also serves as a parallel between the life of a young girl and the spirit of a modern, urban setting. Both are experiencing a period of transition: Lila is a young girl struggling towards womanhood, and the city's neighbourhoods continue to shift in a subtle poetic rhythm between nostalgia for the past, the tension of the present, and the promise of the future. Thus, a central question is probed throughout the film: how can cinema offer another way of seeing?