

## Document Citation

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# TOUTE UNE HEURE

## CORINNE SQUIRE TALKS TO CHANTAL AKERMAN

**Editor's note:** The interview below was conducted within limits more common to popular journalism (an hour's discussion during the 1983 London Film Festival) than to the carefully redacted tapings of scholarly record. Its brevity, if not superficiality, is self-evident—the sort of exchange deemed appropriate for the collection of a few quotations from the director-as-celebrity-*auteur*. It is published here, after some debate within the Editorial Board, for virtually opposing reasons—not to enhance any notion of 'Akerman' as author or authority, but to indicate other factors—institutional, economic, formal—which have recently influenced the work produced under that signature, and indeed throughout the various 'independent' sectors of cinema.

**Corinne Squire:** *I saw **Toute Une Nuit** in Paris last year, and maybe a quarter of the audience walked out . . . .*

**Chantal Akerman:** Oh my god . . . .

*But that was quite interesting, it made me wonder who the people who stayed were. Here the film's being shown in the London Film Festival, and almost everyone will stay. It seems like you're making films for a different audience from before.*

I think it's not a difficult film, *Toute Une Nuit*. Have you seen it again? In Paris the sound and images were very bad. Because it's not one main story, if the theatre quality is not good you lose everything, the atmosphere . . . . In Brussels that film was shown in a normal theatre, a lot of people came, and maybe one or two left. I think they were well prepared. I had spoken about the film on TV and radio, so they were not getting nervous the first twenty minutes, when if you don't know, you try to relate one part of the film to another. Really my film is speaking about very simple things. If you just accept the form there's nothing difficult. I saw yesterday Sally Potter's film (*The Gold Diggers*). Okay, the form is not a usual form, but what she says, also, not everyone can relate to. What I show, everyone can relate to.

*You said once that if you'd stayed in America you wouldn't ever have made narrative films.*

When I was in the United States it was 1971, 2, 3, and at the time I didn't have any preoccupation with making film for theatres. There were a lot of people working like that, taking one or two reels, making a film like you make a painting. You were so far away from Hollywood in New York. There was no mixture at all between people who were making film like paintings, and the industry. But in France, it's not the same at all. I don't know . . . . I used to say this, but I don't know any more if it's true. Probably I would have gone naturally towards more narrative things.

*As you got older?*

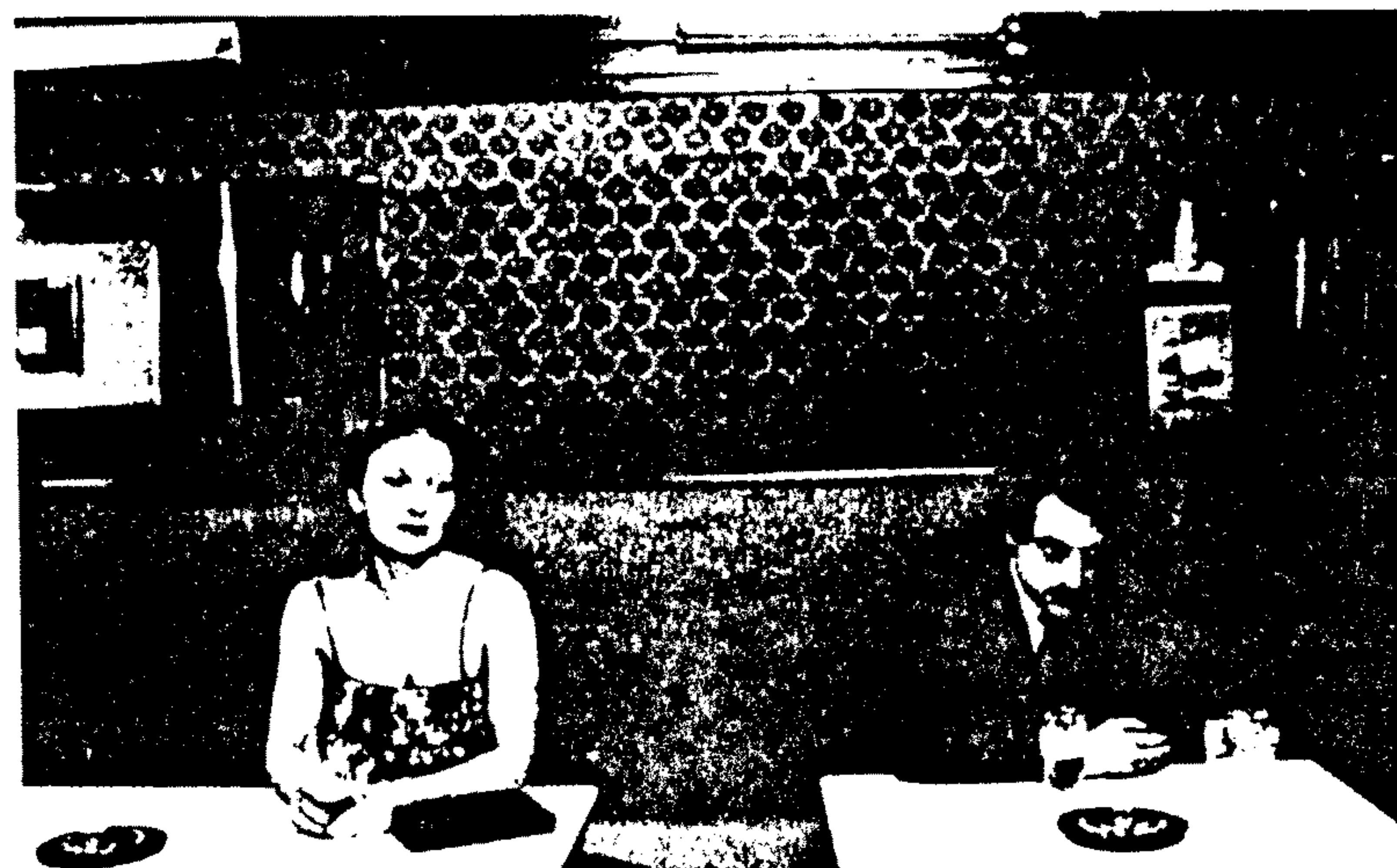
No, it was also a question of the time there. Now, I really don't want to make a very experimental film that cannot be seen.

*Are there any films like that? Even making the most experimental films, you choose a group to work with and show to.*

You know, when I was young I was not aware of that at all: that you choose an audience, or that you can *have* an audience. I was just making a film to try some things that I wanted to try. Now, I try things for myself too, but I don't try the same kind of things. Now . . . I'm really mixed up, you know!

*You said in another interview that you used to find narrative immoral.*

I used to, yes. It's a very long time ago; you know I cannot even remember how I was then.



Right and opposite, scenes from *Toute Une Nuit*.

*People are interested now in what you did before, in your whole body of work; that must be difficult for you.*

It's difficult, because I want to keep going, I can't even talk about 'before' any more.

*But you do quite a lot of interviews.*

Marilyn (Watelet, the producer of *Toute Une Nuit*) says, 'Oh, six months ago, you said this to me', and I don't remember why I said it. I'm not a very reliable person to be interviewed.

*I wanted to ask you about how you work now. You've said that it's impossible to work collectively.*

No, I said that about *Jeanne Dielman*. It was collective like any film is collective. One person is doing camera, another person is doing lighting, and so on. But I didn't want to make a collective film with other people directing with me. Not of something I have written myself.

*But you worked on a joint project with someone, '15/8.*

That was not really a completed project. The two of us decided on Friday to make the film Saturday, and we just took the camera and some reels and we made it together, a friend of mine, Samy Szlingerbaum, and myself.

*Do you still make films like that?*

No, I don't.





*How did you work on **Toute Une Nuit**?*

We shot more than we used, and some didn't work. I wrote the little stories, and I knew how I would start. I knew also that the storm would be the end of the night, and I knew how I would finish. But then we found all the rest in editing the film.

*Do you still work with a lot of women in the film crew? You used to make that choice.*

Not so many, it's less conscious. I choose people who are good to work with, women or men. Yes, that's why it was so funny last night when Sally (Potter) and Helen (Grace) were talking (after the showing of *The Gold Diggers* and *Serious Undertakings*). They have that kind of ideal that I used to have, years ago.

*What made you change?*

It changes when you have done it. It changed because it happens like that; I didn't think about what I was doing. I met other people . . . .

*What about your new film?*

*The Eighties* is a preparation for another film I want to make, a musical. It's auditions and things like that – but real auditions, not set-ups. I shot videotapes of people I might use in the next film. The musical is about love and business; it's a melodrama. *Toute Une Nuit* was not expensive, but the next film is an expensive film, so I don't find the money easily.

*Why do you want to do a musical?*

Oh, because it's lots of fun, and also because in a musical you don't have to be naturalistic, it's already stylised, and that is interesting. And I like to work with sound. It's intuitive, I don't know how I do it. I like to reconstruct natural sound, when you have a scene with sound you don't choose, noise or things like that. It's true, you construct the sound, like music. Again, it's stylised. I think the sound in Sally Potter's film was really fantastic.

*Why is **The Eighties** filmed in Brussels? Why is it an interesting city to film?*

Well, I lived there until I was eighteen. I prefer to shoot in Brussels than in Paris. It's more interesting because of the lines; it's more regular, it's more like New York. It's not like New York in everything, of course – but you can shoot along the lines.

*What happened to the other film you were planning to do, with two people, a comedy?*

I did it on TV for a series called *Camera in a Room*. Television is for making a living, but it's not only that, it's nice sometimes to make things on TV, especially for INA<sup>1</sup>. You have a lot of freedom and you can try things. It's only TV who can produce things like that, because it's not for a theatre. It's about 75 minutes, it's not commercial, it's not with stars. It's nice because you don't have to wait. You propose them a small outline, they give you some money to write a bit more. You don't have to go through a lot of commissioning and producers – they say 'yes' or 'no', and you know. It's nice!

*You haven't used stars in your films.*

But I'd like to if it's possible.

*In the musical?*

I don't know. We'll see. The film is all written. But I need a lot of money for it! After London, I'm going back to Paris to find it.