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Comédie de l'innocence

Comedy of Innocence

Raoul Ruiz

FRANCE, 2000

100 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: **MACT Productions**

Producer: **Martine de Clermont Tonnerre**

Screenplay: **Françoise Dumas, Raoul Ruiz, based on the novel by Massimo Bontempelli**

Cinematographer: **Jacques Bouquin**

Editor: **Mireille Hannon**

Production Designer: **Bruno Beaugé**

Sound: **Jean-Claude Brisson**

Music: **Jorge Arriagada**

Principal Cast: **Isabelle Huppert, Jeanne Balibar, Charles Berling, Nils Hugon, Edith Scob**

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Children often have fantasies that their real family is in fact only a surrogate, that somewhere else their true mother and father exist, living an independent life. Raoul Ruiz, forever intrigued by various levels of reality, turns this universal fantasy into the subject of his new film, a beautifully understated and sensitive work which explores the psyche of a child.

Camille is celebrating his ninth birthday. Instead of a day of happiness, however, it is the day he announces to his mother, Ariane, that he wants to return to his "real home" and his "real mother." He leads her through the streets of Paris to a neighbourhood he recognizes, to an apartment where he claims he lives. The owner, Isabella, is not there, but we soon discover she lost her own son only a few years ago. When Isabella returns, Camille refers to her as his mother and changes his name to Paul. Ariane grudgingly asks Isabella to come and live with them, hoping the child will soon tire of this double game. But he doesn't. Instead he acts as if possessed. When friends decide to intervene and remove the second mother from the scene, the film moves toward its troubling dénouement.

Ruiz constructs this double world with the skill of a magician, employing a cool, detached camera style to persuade us the child is really not playing a game. The more objective the film seems, the more unbalanced we become. Surface appearance and the illusory nature of reality are all themes

dear to Ruiz, and in this story of a boy struggling to find his parents he has created another disturbing tale of Borgesian dimensions, teasing our minds and challenging our notions of what is true.

■ **Piers Handling**



Raoul Ruiz was born in 1941 in Puerto Montt, Chile. He studied cinema in Argentina before moving to Europe in 1973, where he embarked on a prolific career in film and theatre. Feature films include: *Le retour* (64), *The Penal Colony* (70), *Dialogue of Exiles* (74), *Dog's Dialogue* (77), *Three Crowns of the Sailor* (82), *The Golden Boat* (89), *L'œil qui ment* (92), *Trois vies et une seule mort* (96), *Le temps retrouvé* (99) and *Comédie de l'innocence* (00).

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