

The Unicorn Slab

A feature film by Arnaud Romet
achievement October 2021
Presentation file

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I - Presentation of the project and my approach in cinema

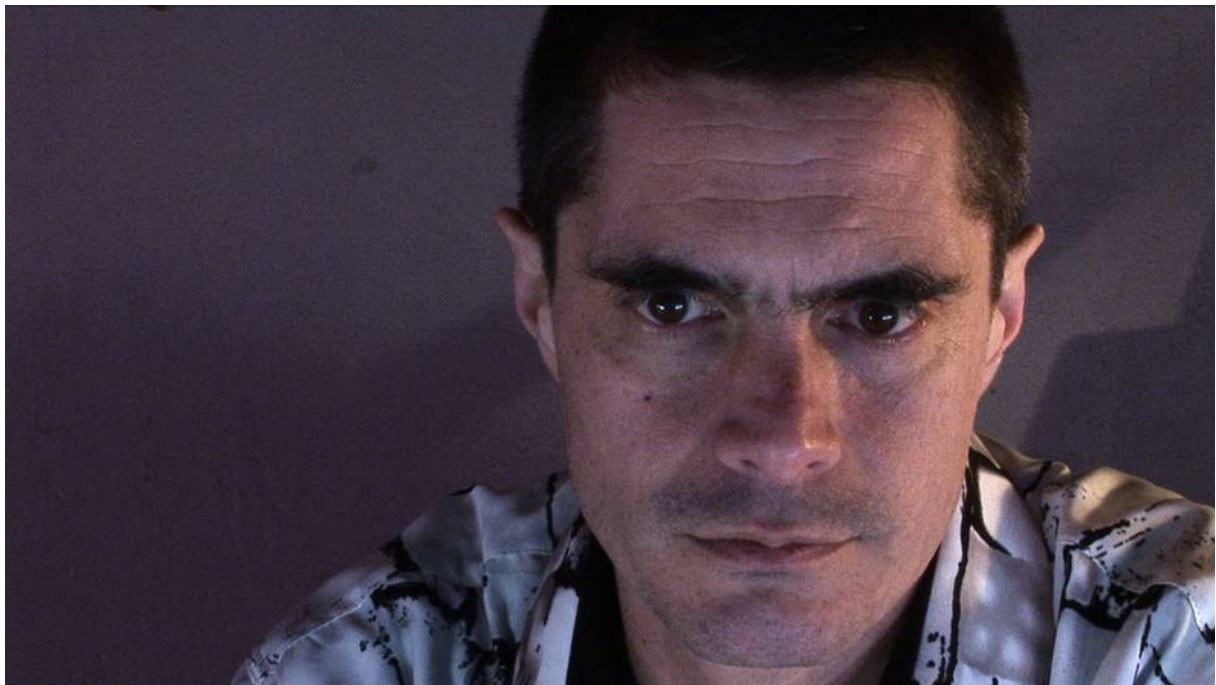
I am a composer of electroacoustic music and I gradually came to the cinema through my experiences in multimedia theater and video. I have made 4 short films since 2015, and I have decided to take a new step in 2021 with the production of a feature film: *The Unicorn Slab*. Cinema is the synthesis of everything I love to do: playing with images, directing actors, creating poetry through images and dialogues, working on the relationship between sound and image, writing a script combining the influence of realism and fantasy.

This feature film project was born in 2017, during the 5-month training course that I followed in Paris where I learned to write and direct feature films. It is inspired by autobiographical facts and anchored in the countryside of Comminges (region of Occitanie, south of France) where I have lived for more than 10 years. It is also inspired by my taste for the supernatural, the fantastic, for a form of

diffuse spirituality that I find very present in the landscapes of the Pyrenean foothills, and that I wish to share through the realization of this project.

In 2017 I made, following the first writing of this screenplay, a short film in the form of a pilot for this project: *The Apparitions*. This short film contains in germ all the elements that will be present in *The Unicorn Slab* : dramaturgy based on a main character living in a small village of Comminges, isolated and in difficulty in his daily life, which will be plagued by apparitions or hallucinations - as you like - which will upset him and put him to the test.

I wish, through the realization of the *Slab of the Unicorn*, to express my taste for intertwined stories with a mix of fantasy and realism able to bring the audience all the way to the edge of the unconscious ; where both the strange and the ordinary become an enchantment.



Short film *The Apparitions* - 2019

Pitch

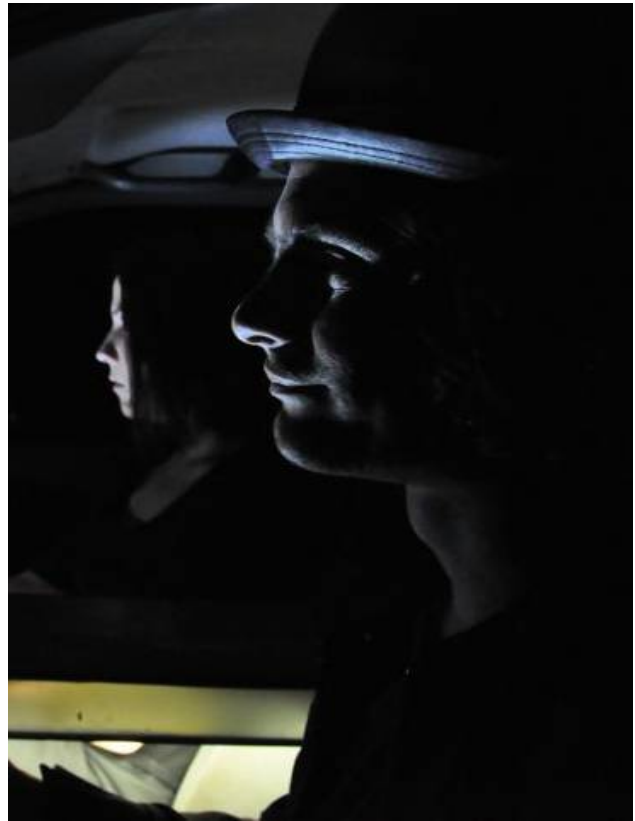
Guillaume is amazed to learn that 2 sulphurous figures from Antiquity, originating from Galilee, were exiled and ended their lives in Saint-Bertrand de Comminges, a small quiet village in the Pyrenees foothills, 2 steps from his home. It is because Herodias and Antipas are cited in the Bible as being the assassins of Saint John the Baptist, nothing less! While he is in the midst of his midlife crisis, between his inspiration breakdown, separation, money problems, this discovery sets him back in motion. He reads, gets information, travels his countryside, meets people ... Little by little these two characters haunt him. He then decides to pass to the other side of the mirror to bring them to the frozen lake

II - Note of intent :

The characters - incarnations

The character of Guillaume, the main protagonist of the film, is inspired by my life: he is an artist, a neorural who came to rebuild his life in the countryside, in this beautiful and remote region of Comminges, in the south of Haute -Garonne. Like many people these days, his life is tough, between the difficulties of couples, money, relationships, inspiration ... We pick him up at the start of the film in the midst of the midlife crisis and we follows him in his various journeys which will make him evolve, come out of his shell, meet new people, and react to the ordeal that presents itself.

This “test” is the emergence in his life of two “monsters”, two individuals who existed in the time of Jesus Christ and worthy of a fantastic book: Herodias and Herod Antipas, princes of Galilee, rich sovereigns, who are truly the assassins of Saint John the Baptist, an eminent figure in our traditional Christian culture. Just like Guillaume, I personally experienced the shock of discovering that these two characters, with high symbolic potential, high negative content, almost diabolical, whose crime is mentioned in the Gospels, were deposed by Rome, and exiled to Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges (then called Lugdunum Convenarum), where they ended their lives. As if these two characters of tragedy, these Judas these sufurous personalities, in their mysterious and fantasized exile, had appeared so close to my home, suddenly in my garden, my meadow !



Short film *Le Rubbant* - 2015

The public

This film is aimed at a wide audience: adults and young people from 12 years old, lovers of poetic films, fantastic films, “original” or “offbeat” arthouse films.

I want to share with the public a certain sensitivity, diffuse, a kind of poetic posture at the edge of the real and the imaginary. I propose a 3rd way, a middle way “between Robert Bresson and Star Wars”, which offers a very open esoteric poetic point, with a lot of hindsight.

Here the spectator witnesses the device. He sees the protagonist in the grip of his problems and of the imaginary creatures and can then project himself into a process of identification and distance.

I invite the spectator to exist in this playful and generous device. This film values the capacity for imagination that everyone has in himself, it activates this faculty that everyone has to project himself into haunting thoughts, to give free rein to emotions that exceed or obsess us: love, fears, attractions, anxieties, dreams, intuitions ...

There will be in this film an anchoring in our time by the life of the character and by his way of reacting to the phenomena which arrives to him. A dimension of humor, of distance, with a certain modernity.

Something where everyone can find their sensitive place as a spectator. Without wanting or being able of course to compete with the usual productions, I hope to manage to lead the spectators in my universe. Thanks to a shooting carried out with few resources (small team, natural sets ...), thanks to a certain mastery of the dramaturgy of image and sound work, thanks to light means of digital post-production (electroacoustic composition, digital editing, inlay processes ...), with enough tactics, strategy, cunning.

My goal is to manage to realize a convincing film, which seduces a large audience and offers them the pleasure of an original “show”, well done, in a shared jubilation.



Short film *Strange Curve* - 2018

I want to talk about history and present

The story of the beheading of John the Baptist is known (linked to the famous dance of the 7 veils by Salomé, daughter of Herodias, at the banquet of Herod Antipas), when the head of St. John is brought on a plate. .. It is attested in the Gospels. But little is known about the fact that Herodias and Herod Antipas ended their lives here in the south of France. There are still some traces in certain Pyrenean legends, especially around Herodias (who would be the sponsor of the beheading of John the Baptist) who wanders in the woods at night ...

Nothing is known of the way in which their exile was carried out here: I therefore had complete freedom for a personal interpretation of their situation in exile. Start from the great history and imagine in my own way a sort of deliquescent daily life.

A tension between the two eras and the two stories

I structured the scenario in this tension between the life of Guillaume and the irruption in his life of these two characters. This device has for me a strong potential of energy and poetry; This double entry allows me to approach the film between a well-anchored reality and an underlying fantastic.

If Guillaume's life is treated in an almost sociological light, I have chosen to treat the two historical figures from a fantastic, theatrical angle: we only see them in their exile in the Pyrenees, in their little prison, they are mysterious, they are fallen, they are strange. They only appear in the picture when Guillaume learns new things about them. He then imagines them, each time, as in imaginary bubbles, in their little geole, dialoguing and lamenting their fate.

I stay on the edge, I don't go completely into the fantastic or the dreamlike. All these appearances these obsessions are only the fantasies of Guillaume that will shake up his life, until a final resolution where he goes through the mirror to find the solution and free himself from the two individuals who obsess him.



Short film *Le Rubbant* - 2015



Short film Les Apparitions - 2019

Countryside and nature of Comminges (South France)

It is important for me to shoot the nature, the countryside, which remains my great inspiration.

The Comminges, a region located on the Pyrenean foothills, is a region of great beauty, by the majesty of its landscapes, by the force of nature, rural and agricultural with the Pyrenees in the background.

It is a region with a secret temperament, cradled in mysteries and silences, which I know quite well since I have lived there for 13 years.

For me this region is a source of poetry of beauty. I simply want to make it play for what it is: natural rural captivating. And play the elements in their visual and sound plastic: lights, plants, horizons, mists, animals ...

In addition, it is rich in heritage and history and deserves to be valued: ancient, medieval remains, monasteries etc ...

Spirituality in art and in cinema

It's all the underlying spiritual side that interests me. A kind of unconscious animism which gives a presence to things, to landscapes, to beings, to moments, as in a "horizontal transcendence".

I believe that there is spiritual in art, art in spiritual, social in spiritual, politics in art, sociological in fantasy ... All things are intertwined.

If wonder why this story of Herodias and Antipas fascinated me, it is undoubtedly because it contains a great phantasmal force and that it touches the foundations of our western civilization based above all on the Judeo-Christian culture (before becoming the civilization of lights). I wonder a lot about the emergence of the

Christian religion in our societies: what was it before, what is the ancestral atavistic religion, how the Christian religion has supplanted and also integrated elements of paganisms, rites of places of symbols, what do the legends still circulating say?

Cinema seems to me to be a formidable tool for making the link between forms, sounds, dialogues, situations. It makes it possible to weave correspondences.

Poetry of situations

My project is to let the spectator find the key himself, it is to invite him on a journey of contemplation, a game of mysteries and hiding places. We are situated between mystery “thriller” and painting of a society, in a poetry which alternates, balances, does not give the solution but lets it be invented.



Short film *Strange Curve* - 2018

Politics

Being a political being too, with both feet planted in today's world, I did not want to leave in a pure fantasy story.

For me it is also important to talk about here and now, about our society. It is important that the fantastic element comes to interfere with reality but does not come to involve it completely. By jostling him it comes to raise questions of our society: a relative loneliness of people, a relative poverty and relegation of the countryside, a relational difficulty linked to the time ...

The film puts the protagonist, Guillaume, to the test, brings him to an existential crisis, and it asks him to find a solution, certainly very personal.

Mediation of the main role as an artist

Basically, perhaps all this is only an artistic metaphor, which shows an artist with the difficulties for creation linked to his social difficulties: he will finally manage to conquer his demons in order to be able to renew his art.

It is ultimately through his creativity, his reactivity, that Guillaume understands that he must lead the destiny of these two characters to its end, to free themselves from it, thus leading a kind of saving catharsis.

In the end, Guillaume regains custody of his son, he solves his money problems, he finds a new partner, he renews his artistic expression.

Project therefore full of hope, where art and artistic mediation come to save from depression and isolation.

Guillaume, painter, is perhaps only a duplicate of myself. In this strange research around these two historical figures, he will question his art, painting, to come to a form of plastic art more animated, by projections of lights, more spontaneous, which will allow him to reinvent himself as a creator.

And if it simply was a metaphor of myself becoming a filmmaker?



Short film *The Apparitions* - 2019

My references - *Buster's Mal Heart*

My references are in the (modest!) wake of filmmakers such as David Lynch (*Lost Highway*, *Mulholland Drive*), Jean Cocteau (*Orphée*, *Beauty and the Beast*), Terrence Malick (*To the Wonder*), Ingmar Bergman (*The Hour of the Wolf*), Aki Kaurismäki (*the Man without the Past*, *Far Go the Clouds*), but also Michel Gondry, Jean-Jacques Beneix (*Thoe moon in the gutter*) ... but also **Sarah Adina Smith**, a young American filmmaker whom I recently discovered on Netflix with her film ***Buster's Mal Heart***, which has become the model of what I want to do with *The Brame of the Unicorn*, both on the relationship of the main character to reality, on his sociological anchoring, on his way to escape his boring life, on its strangeness once the break has been made, on the plastic quality of the dreamlike sequences, as well as on the very original and innovative sound work.

III - Note on the production project - shooting in October 2021

I decided to carry out this project **at all costs**, without further delay, and to shoot it in October 2021, with the means at my disposal, with a small team of actors surrounded by a team made up of "artist technicians", volunteers, students, and, if the budget allows it, a few real professionals (cinematographer, sound engineer, editor ...)

With the experience of shooting my short film *Les Apparitions* in 2017, I can count on a certain number of supports, at the local level (the ENSAV, the Usine Théâtre, the Videophages ...), and I can hope then to develop partnerships with production companies and obtain help from institutions.

Script writing - progress

Processing done + pitch + synopsis. Items to finish: cutting and storyboard.

A shoot in October 2021

The shooting will take place entirely in Haute-Garonne, mainly in Comminges (south France), with a few scenes also in Toulouse. It will be probably about a shooting of 2 to 3 weeks, with many "naturalistic" scenes in the village of the protagonist (Arnaud-Guilhem-31360), in his house, in the countryside and the surrounding villages (St-Bertrand de Comminges, Saint Gaudens etc.) and a few more "artificial" scenes which will be shot in the same place, a sort of studio, the barn of Herodias and Antipas.

Finally the big final scene, when these two characters are freed from their geole, takes place first on a mountain path, then around a lake. Part of this lake scene will be filmed in the studio, on a green background. These sequences with the actors filmed on a green background will be "embedded" in post-production on images of the frozen lake, to which we will still add the plastic projections of shadows and lights that Guillaume, harnessed to his overhead projector, will create at this point.



Short film *Strange Curve* - 2018

Casting :

The cast includes 1 main actor - our 40-year-old protagonist - three secondary actors - the two characters exiled during antiquity and the woman at the reception of the art gallery- 2 small roles (the friend from the village, the character of St-Bertrand de Comminges), as well as some extras -the people of the market, the old man of the village, the Gauls around the fire etc ... + 1 electro-industrial musician/performer in concert. The main actor will be the actor of the Apparitions: Julien Charrier. I am currently in the process of the casting for the other roles.

Technical team :

I would like to create the film as an author-director, accompanied by a team of technicians including: 1 chief operator, 1 1st assistant, 1 sound engineer, 1 sound assistant, 1 lighting technician, 1 set designer, 1 stage manager, 1 script..



Short film *10 times nothing or the Morning Dissipations* - 2016

Artistic atmospheres:

I want to take great care in capturing the natural daytime and nighttime light atmospheres (the beautiful Comminges countryside, an old house full of charms, Guillaume's painter's studio ...), as well as in the scenographic work of the imaginary scenes (in a "cardboard" decor, a small barn refurbished in an "expressionist" way, with low-rise lighting). To approach the personality of the characters, I will rely on a materialist and aesthetic approach to the framing, with very close-ups on the faces, on the eyes, on the marks of the skin, on the hands ... This materialist approach, I intend to apply it also in the field of sound, with a work of fine capture of the sounds of the environment (ambiances of the village, sounds of the house, of the countryside, of the places ...). In addition, there will be a work of sound effects (sounds of the lake, cracking ice, etc.) and lastly an electroacoustic composition work which will weave an enveloping musical and sound framework throughout the film.

Personal involvement:

I will be personally involved in all aspects of this creation:

As the author of course, having written the screenplay.

As a director, being in the direction of actors, in the shooting (even if I count on a chief-operator) and a real technical team to assist me at this level)

As a composer musician, because I will compose the music myself, being by my first profession an electroacoustic composer. I am planning a composition session of one month downstream of the project, in november & décembre 2021, with abstract sound materials (synthesizers , effects ...) and concrete sounds from the shoot, in a spectrum ranging from realism to the abstract. This electroacoustic and musical composition will have a decisive role in the plastic and poetic singularity of the film.

As an editor, because I think, even if I hope to entrust the editing to a professional, to be present in the image editing, and to be very involved in the sound editing.



Short film *10 times nothing or the Morning Dissipations* - 2016

IV - Technical details on the shoot:

Dates: filming will take place over a period of 3 weeks in October 2021, in Comminges (South West of France)

Shooting schedule:

The main actor, Julien Charrier, will be present on the 3 weeks and on the majority of the sequences, except the scenes with the two characters of antiquity in their geole.

All the scenes around the village, the house etc will take 4 days to shoot.

The scenes in Toulouse will be shot over one day.

The scenes in St Bertrand de Comminges over two days.

The scenes imagined with the 2 characters in their geole will take a day of studio shooting.

The other scenes where they walk on the lake will also be shot in the studio, over one day.

The market scene in Saint-Gaudens will be shot on a half day.

The scene outside the path to the lake should take a day.

The scene on the lake one day.

The concert will be filmed one evening, live, during an evening open to the public, at the Usine Théâtre (Mazères-sur-Salat - 31).

Technical team :

The following minimum team is needed: a chief operator, a 1st assistant, a script manager, a sound engineer and sound assistant (boom operator).

Upstream: a production manager

Other positions to be filled: a lighting technician, a set designer, a stage manager, an actor director, an editor.



Short film *10 times nothing or the Morning Dissipations* - 2016

Filming locations:

the village of Arnaud-Guilhem (31360 - Haute-Garonne) with its streets, its church, a house in the village, the surrounding countryside, the village of Saint-Bertrand de Comminges (the streets, the cathedrals, the art center), a market (Saint-Gaudens), the Place St Sernin the Saint-Raymond Museum the Périgord library in Toulouse, a concert venue (the Usine Théâtre in Mazères-sur-Salat), a theater studio (Usine Théâtre) for the realization of theatrical scenes and post production scenes, a mountain path and a mountain lake ...



Short film *The Apparitions* - 2019

Structures requested for volunteering :

This is an independent film project, which will rely on all the benevolent collaborators, professionals, students or amateurs that I'll cross between now and the shooting, in October 2021.

Universities : The ENSAV (École Nationale Supérieure d'Audiovisuel) in Toulouse from which I will ask for technical and artistic collaborations, just as that has been the case for the shooting of *the Apparitions* in 2017. The University of Toulouse with the search for a trainee in cultural development...

High schools : the cinema section of the Lycée Bagatelle in Saint-Gaudens for help from student trainees.

Cinemas : The Cinéma Le Régent in St-Gaudens, asked to organize a support evening, and asked for the preview of the film.

Theaters : the Usine Theater in Mazères sur Salat for the shooting of the studio scenes, for the concert scene, and for material support and logistical assistance.

The Pronomade (s) and Le Ring (31) for the loan of equipment.

Relay associations : Les Vidéophages, for relays to institutions and production companies in Occitania, as well as for their regional network of distributors and festivals.

Volunteering : recourse to volunteer helpers for the filming period (3 weeks in the month of October 2021) for meals, handling, accommodation, hospitality, transport, filming aids, etc.

I can count on Isabelle Sens for the companionship (script, files, image editing, etc.) throughout the project.

V - Production:

We've created a association, **Microlumen**, in February 2021. This association will make it possible to request grants for the project :

Subsidy requests from Institutions: Occitanie Region, Haute-Garonne Departmental Council, Cagire-Garonne-Salat Community of Communes, Haut Garonnaises Pyrenees Community of Communes, Cœur & Coteaux du Comminges Community of Communes, City of Toulouse ...

Crowdfunding : Launch of a crowdfunding campaign in April 2021.

Companies sponsorship : search for corporate sponsorship, solicitation of works councils (Companies in Boussens, Cellulose d'Aquitaine company in St-Gaudens, etc.)

Production companies : ideally we are always hoping to find a cinema production company to support our fundraising research. Solicitation in progress: solicitation of production companies at regional and national level ...



Short film 10 times nothing or the Morning Dissipations - 2016

VI - Broadcast - distribution:

Classic distribution : Ideally I am looking for a distributor in cinemas. In practice, it will be difficult to find such a partner before the first stages of editing the film (winter 2022). From there we will in particular seek networks of independent distributors such as the network of Utopia cinemas, but also traditional distributors.

Locally : We are certainly already planning screenings in the country of Comminges: at Le Régent cinema in St-Gaudens, by the CinéFol31 network, as well as in Haute-Garonne (by Videophages,) and Occitanie (Independence Festival (s) and Création-Ciné32 etc, festival de Luchon...)

Nationally and internationally : we plan to send the film to festivals such as: Premiers Plans in Angers, Les Enfants Terribles (04), Aubagne International Film Festival, Belfort International Film Festival, Les Conviviales Art, Cinema and Rurality of Nannay etc ... as well as in international festivals. Uses of the platforms ClickforFestivals, Festhome, FilmFestPlattform, FilmFreeWay, Reelport ...

By servers: we are also looking for broadcasting on internet, on digital cable channels (History Channel, etc.) in particular.

V - Links to my works :

Cinema:

<http://arnaud.romet.free.fr/films.htm>

Direct link to the short film *The Apparitions* : <https://vimeo.com/321942097>

Password: 0000

Music: <http://arnaud.romet.free.fr/musiques.htm>

& the Paysages 700 album: <https://arnaudromet.bandcamp.com/releases>

Texts: <http://arnaud.romet.free.fr/textes.htm>

Staging: <http://www.iatus.net/>

See also the theoretical writing **And if the sound revealed the image:**

<http://arnaud.romet.free.fr/films/Etsilesen.pdf>

Curriculum vitae : <http://arnaud.romet.free.fr/films/bio-arnaud-romet.pdf>



Short film *Le Rubbant*- 2015

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