



OVID

NEW YORK

A FILM BY VITO A. ROWLANDS

78 MIN. / COLOR AND BW / 35MM / U.S.A. & BELGIUM / 2024

Seven tales of transformation poetically reimagine Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and paint a picture of violence and catharsis, anchored in mythical landscapes

**WORLD PREMIERE
BROOKLYN FILM FESTIVAL
2024**

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OVID, NEW YORK

A FILM BY VITO A. ROWLANDS
 STARRING APRIL MATTHEIS BLANCA NORWOOD LINDSEY RICO TINA MAKHARADZE ROBERT M. JOHANSSON EMIL DAUBON CRAIG MUNGVAIR JUNSHIN SOGA MAX WEINBACH NICHOLAS WEINBACH
 DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY THOMAS HERAN COSTUME DESIGNER JORDAN DYKSTRA MUSIC BY BRIAN JOE TESSAL EDITOR A. FRANKLIN GREGORY JOHN FITTON PRODUCTION DESIGNER ANDREW MAZZEI
 POST PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR COURTNEY WELLS VISUAL MAT ROUSO HAIR AMARA GURFIDE GROOMER MORGAN GRESH A. MUMFORD JENSEN
 FILM PRODUCTION BY VITO A. ROWLANDS THOMAS HERAN HANNA SENAY WRITTEN BY DANIELA A. FIVITA BY VITO A. ROWLANDS
 BASED UPON THE MEANING OF LIVES
 PRODUCED BY THE MEANING OF LIVES

colorlab

PRESS & REVIEWS

“a unique film and one-of-a-kind viewing experience [...] I can't wait to see what Rowlands does next”

[Dustin Chang, Screen Anarchy](#)

**“30-year-old Agfa film, a talking praying mantis, and a haunted Hoover.
Director Vito Rowlands and cinematographer Thomas Heban were the masters
of their own mythology in Rowlands’ poetic adaptation of the Metamorphoses”**

[British Cinematographer](#)

**“[Rowlands] creates audiovisual poetry that’s immersive and magical. The characters are complex and flawed, and the
mythological aspect is enhanced through bugs, animals, and statues that the gods communicate through.
Fantastical and violent, *Ovid, New York* is a whole universe”**

[34th Street Mag](#)

“It made me think of the dreamlike films of David Lynch. The chapters all beg to be rewatched”

[Filmmaker Mixer](#)

[An interview with Belgian-born Brooklyn filmmaker Vito Rowlands | Greenpointers](#)

[An interview with Vito Rowlands | Brooklyn Film Festival](#)



OVID, NEW YORK

Of bodies chang'd to various forms, I sing...

Seven tales of transformation poetically reimagine Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and paint a picture of violence and catharsis, anchored in mythical landscapes.

The film's stories range in tone from crimson surreal to the darkest of comedy, playfully shifting moods, genres, and seasons without losing sight of its overarching mythology. It follows a lone bounty hunter prowling across snow covered mountains, a famous actress out for revenge, statuary lovers peeping leaves, a distraught demigod waxing poetic, an entomologist meeting her match in a mantis, a vacuum salesman haunted by his motel room, and twin ferrymen guarding the underworld by demanding exact change.



Tina Makharadze

II STILL LIFE WITH FLOWERS & DEAD GAME

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Film, for me, is still one of the greatest magic tricks. As a kid, reading and watching films would immerse me in worlds that had their own set of rules and boundaries, and moved at their own pace. Myths and mythical creatures loomed large, and their magic oddly brought the real world into focus. It was the type of experience that was only replicated by traveling and being in nature - and in my case also by raising pet stick insects. It's probably not so hard to track a course from there to my first feature film, *Ovid, New York*.

We all know that cinematic worlds are more than just a form of escapism. Fantastical allegories frame the violence and bleakness of tumultuous times in ways that are both subversive and immersive. Dark but still playful. Poetic yet cutting. In *Ovid, New York*, I wanted to create a universe that similarly exists outside of time. Hopefully you will find it to be a place in which the lines between our world and the liminal are exceedingly blurry and often crossed. The film's seven chapters are myths for modern times, allegories that tap into a violent, beautiful, and mysterious yet universal world.

Coming from one of the flattest countries in the world myself, the ever-changing mountainous landscapes of New York State continue to provide this surreal feeling for me. Its many Dutch names, moreover, make it feel eerily uncanny. I embraced landscapes and the changing of the seasons in the same way that Ovid did. Much of his lyricism in *Metamorphoses* consists of allegories for a changing earth. We shot across the four seasons for a year to find that poetry. It took us out to the Western Catskills, the Hudson Valley, and the Finger Lakes, where there is a magical little town called Ovid, New York. This is also where our film comes to an end.

Animals and statues similarly populate the *Metamorphoses* and *Ovid, New York*, they are charmed vessels through which gods communicate and manifest themselves, never showing us their true form. You will run into enchanted deer, beetles, cicadas, mantids, caterpillars, butterflies, and even a petrified centaur.

Like most of my other work, *Ovid, New York* is also a film that draws attention to its own materiality. In this case, the living, breathing textures of our long-expired AGFA XT100 35mm color negative stock. We leaned into the stock's characteristics and flaws, skewing heavily as it did towards reds and blues, for instance, and embraced and foregrounded artifacts such as remjet stains and flash frames. We bleach-bypassed one chapter to add more contrast and texture. The film really aims to mirror its characters. It is complex, flawed, mysterious, textured, and, most of all, alive. I think it adds a crucial layer of magical realism to the film.



KEY CREDITS

Writer, director, editor

Vito A. Rowlands

Cinematography and color

Thomas Heban

Score

Jordan Dykstra

1st assistant camera

Gregory John Fitton

Production sound

Andrew Mazzei

Producers

Vito A. Rowlands

Thomas Heban

Hash Sesay

Sound design

Joe Tisdall

Casting

Morgan Green

Opening painting

Amaya Gurpide

Title painting

Mat Rousso

Production Company

Mumler Jaenzon Film

Cameras and Lenses

Panavision, New York

Colorlab

Mono No Aware

Poster

Matt Needle

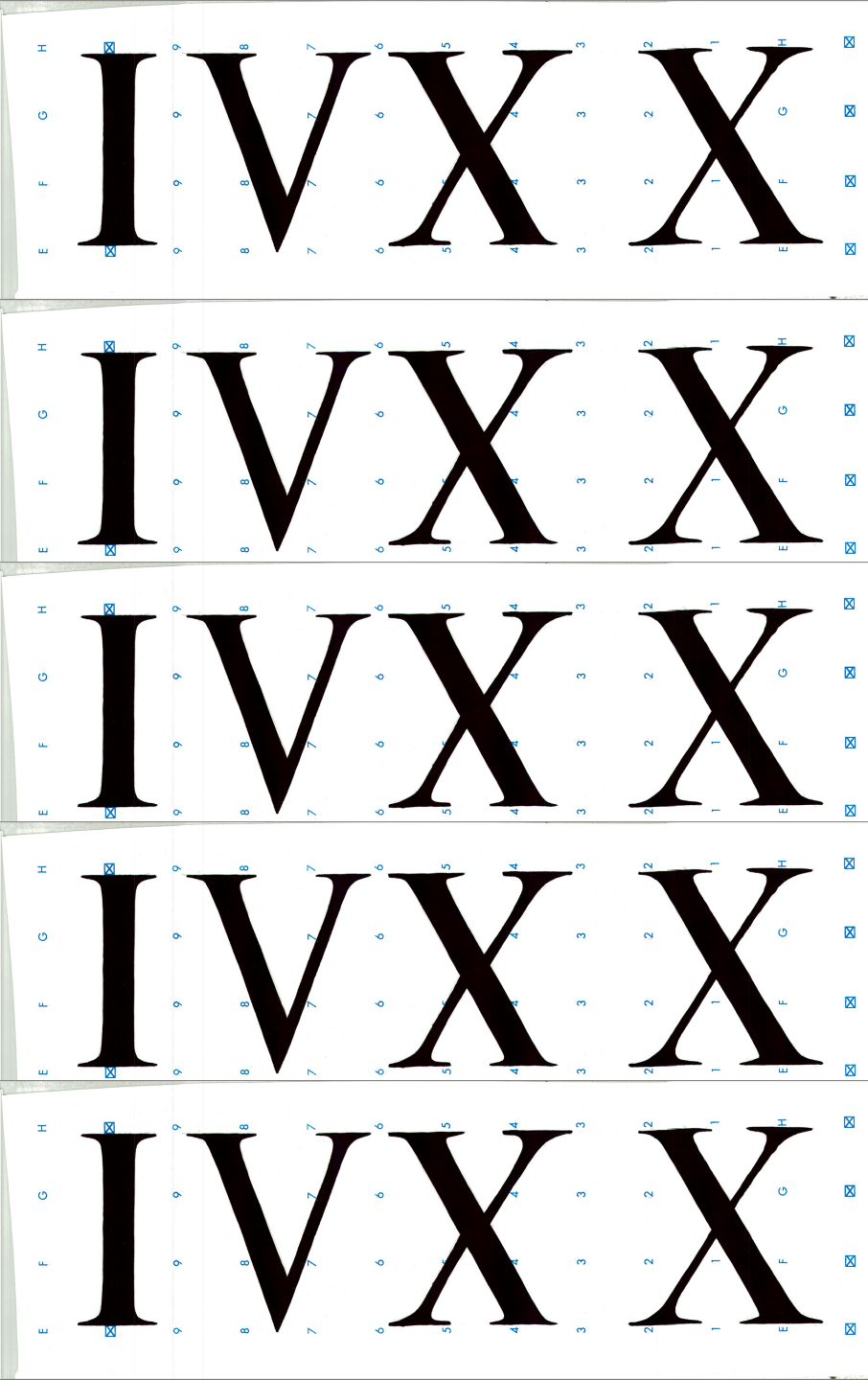
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KEY CAST

Emil Daubon

Tina Makharadze

Robert M. Johanson

b

Lindsay Rico

April Matthis

André

Junshin Soga

Craig Mungavin

Max Weinbach

Nicholas Weinbach

Mike Merisi

Mimi / Medea

Jason

Hippolytus / Marie

Diana / Jules

Elle / Mother

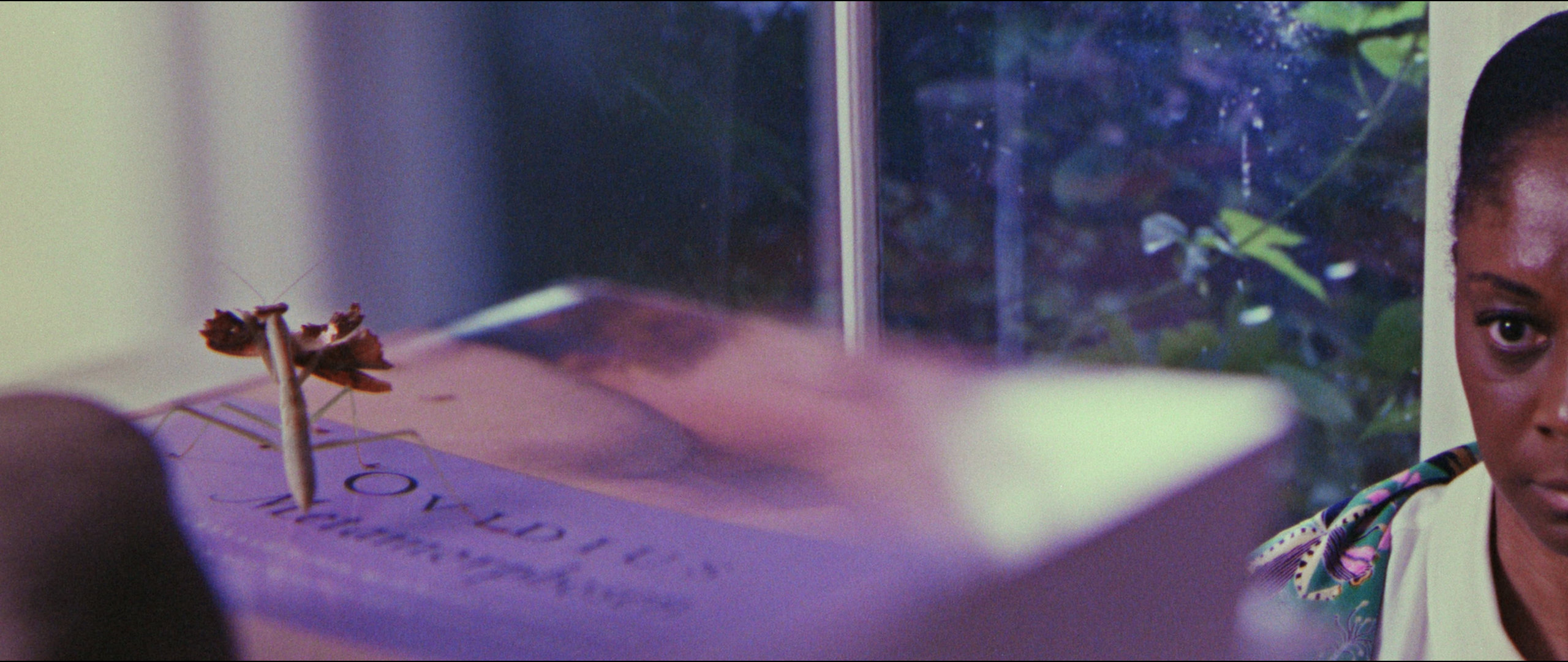
Mel the Mantis

Prometheus

Willy Tishen

Karon

Charon



Mel the Mantis and April Matthis

TECH SPECS

<i>Runtime</i>	78 minutes
<i>Color</i>	Color and black and white
<i>Languages</i>	English, Georgian, Polish, Japanese, Dutch
<i>Aspect ratio</i>	2.4:1
<i>Negative formats</i>	35 mm Agfa XT100 shot 2-perf rated at 25 ISO 16 mm Kodak 250D 7207, Kodak 50D 7203, Orwo N74 BW Super 8 Kodak Ektachrome 100D
<i>Cameras</i>	Arriflex 35 BL4 Panavision Panaflex Gold GII Bolex H16 Rex 5 Canon Autozoom 1014 Super 8
<i>Laboratory</i>	Colorlab, Rockville MD Mono No Aware, Brooklyn NY
<i>Processing</i>	Hand developed 16mm BW Bleach bypass Chapter VI - The Pale Cloudless Sulphur



Craig Mungavin

VI THE PALE CLOUDLESS SULPHUR

Vito has taught in Amsterdam, Brussels, and Copenhagen, as well as at Columbia University. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Experimental Film and Media at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and a 16mm film instructor at Mono No Aware in Brooklyn. He is a co-author of *Screening Statues: Sculpture and Cinema* and the author of *Velvet Curtains and Gilded Frames: The Art of Early European Cinema*.

www.vitorowlands.com
[@vitorowlands](#)
[IMDb](#)
[NYU](#)

A black and white portrait of a man with dark, wavy hair and a light beard, looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a light-colored, textured sweater. The background is dark and textured.



Max and Nicholas Weinbach

VII THE FALL

CINEMATOGRAPHY

The biggest creative challenge for the cinematography of *Ovid, New York* was balancing the need to highlight each chapter's specific tone, genre, and language while at the same time supporting the overall visual cohesiveness. Assembling a team that allowed for shooting on various flavors of celluloid provided the analog connective tissue, binding each chapter together. The project would have been impossible without the generous support of Steve Cossman at Mono No Aware; Chris Bieler, Chuck Valencia and their team at Panavision, who supported us via the New Filmmaker Grant; and Vinny Terlizzi, Chris Robinson, and the tireless gang at Colorlab.

Thomas Heban is a New York-based cinematographer. He has an MFA in Cinematography, an MFA in Digital Animation & Interactive Media, and an MLA in landscape architecture. His work on *Into The Silver Ether* (directed by Vito A. Rowlands) was in competition at the Raindance, Brooklyn, HollyShorts, and Nitehawk film festivals. His first feature film, the 35mm anthology film *Ovid, New York* (Vito A. Rowlands) premiered at the 2024 Brooklyn Film Festival. His award-winning animated shorts have toured festivals internationally.

www.thomasheban.com
[IMDb](#)



SCORE

The score for *Ovid, New York* utilizes a number of different compositional approaches and instruments — acoustic guitars, violas, pianos, keyboards, processed sounds, soundscapes, etc. — to aid the stylistic leanings of the film. From an arrangement of Hermeto Pascoal's "Bebe" (written in the style of Michael Nyman), to the original do-wop song "Eye to Eye," to nods to Morton Feldman, the score acts as an intriguing and playful chameleon which glues the chapters of the film together. The soundtrack will be digitally released June 7, 2024.



Jordan Dykstra is a Brooklyn-based composer-performer of chamber music and film music. His album *The Arrow of Time* (New World Records) was listed as one of the best Modern Composition albums of 2020 by The Wire and included in the list for Best Contemporary Classical Albums of 2020 by Bandcamp. Dykstra's chamber music has been programmed in venues around the world (Tokyo, Reykjavík, Los Angeles, New York City, Zürich, Ostrava [CZ], Brussels, Berlin, Ano Syros [GR], Rhode Island, and Texas, amongst others) and his film scores has been heard at numerous film festivals (Cannes, Sundance, IFFR, TriBeCa, TIFF, DocNYC, Art Basel, etc.). In addition, as a performer Dykstra has been heard with bands such as Dirty Projectors, Atlas Sound, A Winged Victory for the Sullen, Valet, and Lucky Dragons. He scored the film "20 Days in Mariupol" — a 2024 Academy Award winner for Best Documentary Feature, a BAFTA for Best Documentary, the Audience Award at Sundance Film Festival, amongst many others — and of which The Wall Street Journal wrote "[was] aided greatly by an eerie, tonal score by Jordan Dykstra."

www.jordandykstra.com
[IMDb](#)

Photograph by Melanie Barksdale

PRODUCERS

Vito A. Rowlands | Writer, director, editor, co-producer

Thomas Heban | Cinematographer, co-producer

Hash Sesay is a Sierra Leonean-American filmmaker who brings life to stories that explore socio-political themes through comedy and surrealism. He earned his BFA in Film and Video Production from The City College of New York and completed his MFA in Cinema Arts from Brooklyn College Feirstein School of Cinema. As a U.S. Army veteran and former registered nurse, he's leveraged his life journey to evolve into an empathetic creative, who brings various perspectives to their work. His film *"Day of Joy,"* which he co-directed, wrote, and produced, is currently available on Amazon Prime Video. Additionally, *"Hysterical Justice,"* a satirical documentary exploring race in America, was awarded Best Short Film at the 2022 Katra Summer Film Series and was a Semi-Finalist at the 2022 Student Academy awards. As he continues to pursue his creative ventures in film, he is also employed as the staff production manager at Very Rare Productions, where he contributes to the production of advertising content for diverse brands. Hash played a crucial part in bringing together all the pieces to bring *Ovid, New York* to life, and along with Vito A. Rowlands and Thomas Heban he founded Mumler Jaenzon Film to that end.

www.hashsesay.com
[IMDb](#)



ADDITIONAL STILLS







II STILL LIFE WITH FLOWERS & DEAD GAME

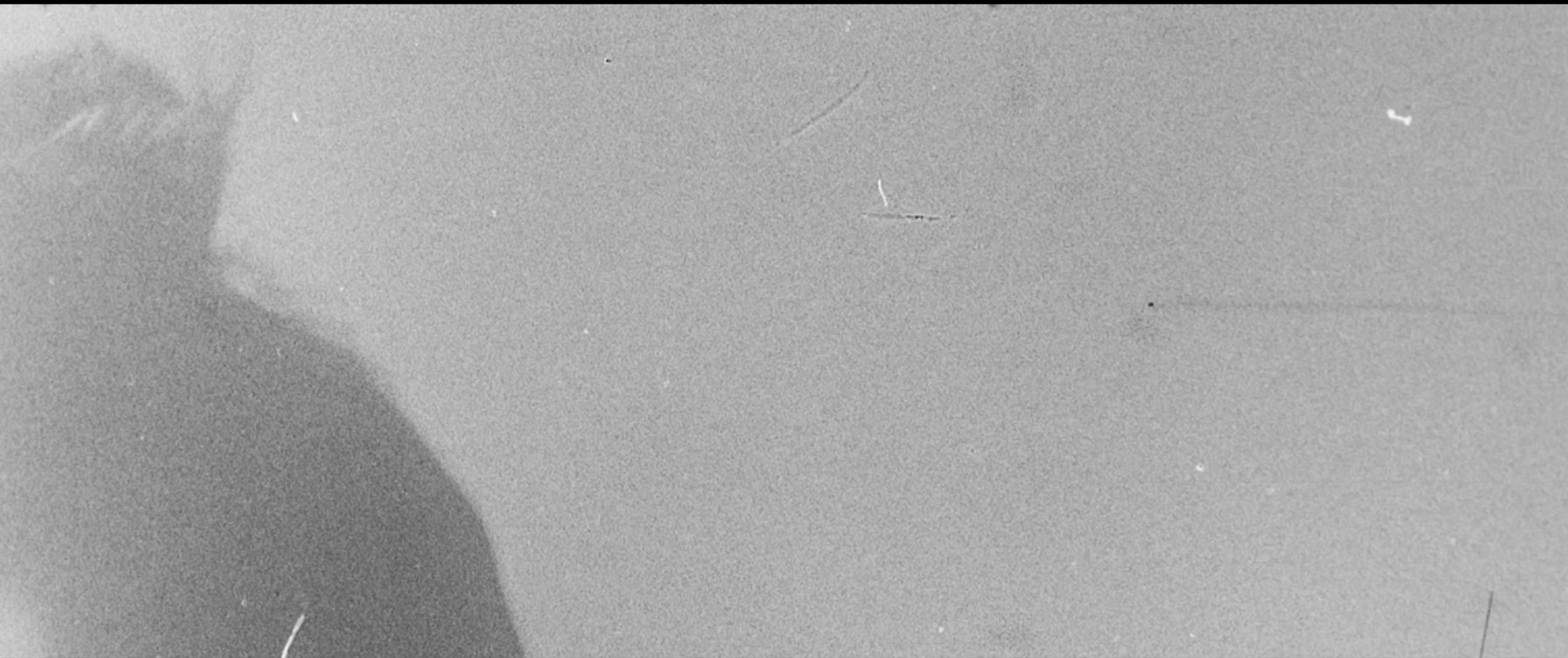


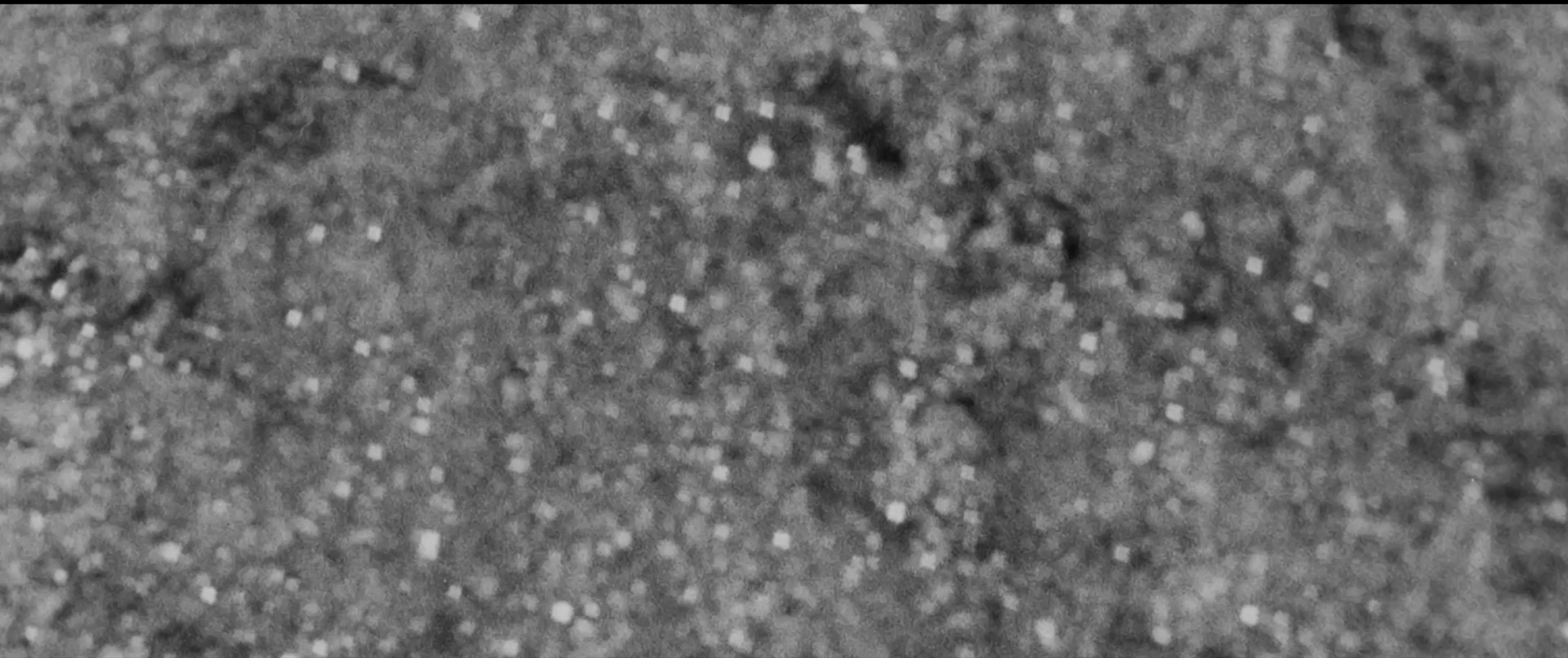
Tina Makharadze

II STILL LIFE WITH FLOWERS & DEAD GAME



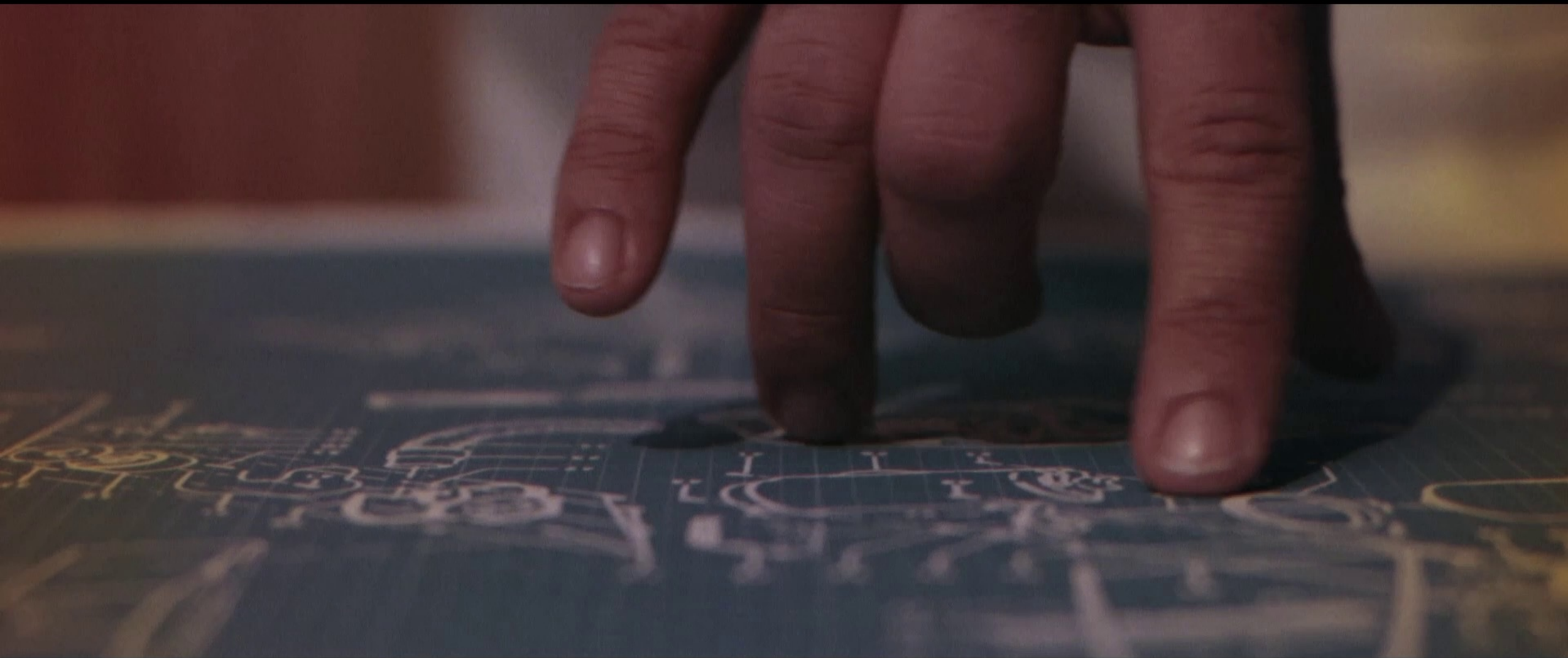


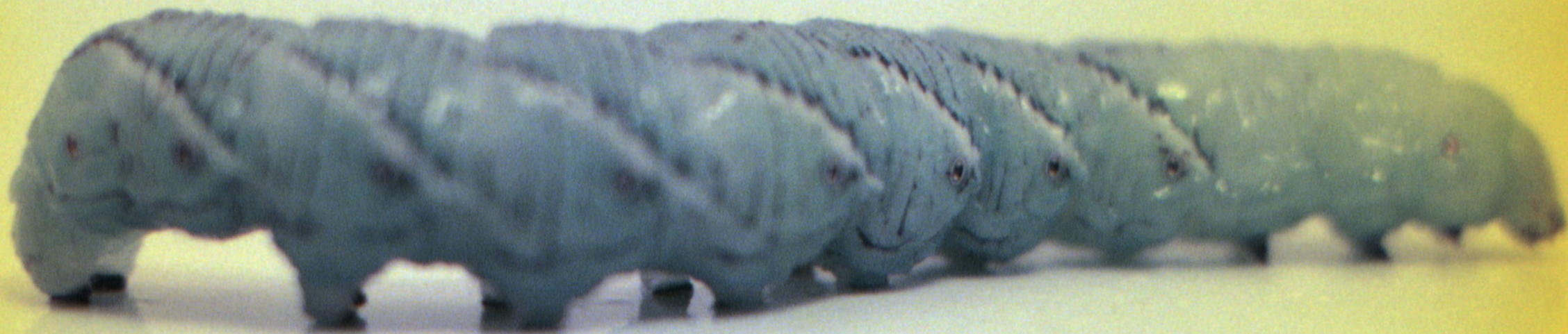
















BEHIND THE SCENES



*Emil Daubon, Vito A. Rowlands, and Thomas Heban
by Andrew Mazzei*

Thomas Heban by Greg Fitton



Emil Daubon by Greg Fitton



*Dan Jennings, Greg Fitton, and Thomas Heban
by Andrew Mazzei*

Thomas Heban and Vito A. Rowlands by Greg Fitton





*Vito A. Rowlands and Thomas Heban
Tina Makharadze*



*Vito A. Rowlands and Tina Makharadze
Robert M. Johanson and Thomas Heban*





Vito A. Rowlands and Lindsay Rico by Thomas Heban



*Centaur Statue & Panavision Panaflex Gold GII
by Vito A. Rowlands*



*Vito A. Rowlands and Mel the Mantis
by Thomas Heban*



April Matthis and Thomas Heban by Hash Sesay



*Thomas Heban and Vito A. Rowlands
by Greg Fitton*



Ovid, New York crew by Craig Mungavin



*Vito A. Rowlands and Thomas Heban
by Greg Fitton*



Craig Mungavin by Greg Fitton



*A glass of teal hornworm caterpillars
by Craig Mungavin*



Thomas Heban, Craig Mungavin, Andrew Mazzei, and Vito A. Rowlands by Hash Sesay



Thomas Heban and Greg Fitton by Andrew Mazzei



Greg Fitton and Vito A. Rowlands by Thomas Heban



Max and Nicholas Weinbach by Vito A. Rowlands

TRIVIA

TRIVIA / Chapter I, *The Rippling Pool*

- * The opening painting is oil on paper and was made for the film by Spanish artist Amaya Gurpide.
- * The film opens with a long take at magic hour in the morning and closes on a long take at magic hour in the evening.
- * All of the film's key titles were designed and hand-painted by sign painter Mat Rousso.
- * Actor Emil Daubon was also a Special Forces Medical Lieutenant.
- * The two beetles are a shield-backed bug (*Eucorysses grandis*) and an African green scarab (*Dicronorhina micans*).
- * The deer present in this chapter are whitetail, fallow, and sika.
- * Actaeon was a Greek hero who was transformed into a deer for spying on the goddess Diana while she was bathing.
- * Cerambus was a grandson of Poseidon who was turned into a beetle for insulting the nymphs.
- * Inspired by snow Westerns such as Sergio Corbucci's *Il Grande Silenzio* (*The Great Silence*; 1968).

TRIVIA / Chapter II, *Still Life with Flowers & Dead Game*

- * The statues seen in the park are of Greek goddess Athena (by Spiro Goggakis); Greek philosopher Socrates (by Anthony Frudakis); and Greek playwright Sophocles (by Chris Vilardi). They reside in Athens Square Park in Astoria, Queens, New York.
- * Actor Tina Makharadze is Georgian, comes from Western Georgia (the former Colchis), and has been riding her bicycle around Medea's statue in Batumi since she was a child.
- * Shot partially at the St. George Theatre in Staten Island, which was designed as a movie palace and opened in 1929.
- * Two film posters can be seen, foreshadowing things to come. They are from *Os Canibais* (*The Cannibals*; Manoel de Oliveira, 1988) and *A Zed & Two Noughts* (Peter Greenaway, 1985).
- * The characters Lina, Chantal, Agnès, and Larisa are named in honor of filmmakers Lina Wertmüller, Chantal Akerman, Agnès Varda, and Larisa Shepitko.
- * The novel Mimi (played by Tina Makharadze) is reading is Swedish author Pär Lagerkvist's *Sibyllan* (*The Sibyl*; 1956).
- * Draws inspiration from the work of Peter Greenaway.

TRIVIA / Chapter III, *Three Graces*

- * The character of Diana/Jules (played by Lindsay Rico) can be seen wearing a Vera Chytilová shirt. The chapter pays homage to her film *Sedmikrásky* (*Daisies*; 1966), which also follows two young characters in a surreal, allegorical environment.
- * Ends with an iris-out in homage to nouvelle vague filmmakers like Agnès Varda, Alain Resnais, Éric Rohmer, and François Truffaut.
- * Apart from the work of Varda and Chytilová, also inspired by *4 aventures de Reinette et Mirabelle* (Éric Rohmer, 1987) and *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (*Last Year at Marienbad*; Alain Resnais, 1961).

TRIVIA / Chapter IV, *Figures in a Landscape*

- * Shot on a combination of black-and-white 16mm stock and Super 8 Ektachrome by director Vito A. Rowlands, hand-processed at Mono No Aware.
- * Performed by actor Junshin Soga, who also provides the voice over in Japanese.
- * The only chapter to portray a god directly.
- * Mainly shot on the granite blocks that make up Outlook Hill on Governors Island in New York City.

TRIVIA / Chapter V, *Circadian Hymns*

- * Features Brood X periodical cicadas, which only emerge every 17 years. They were captured on 16mm in 2021 by the director, Vito Rowlands, in Princeton, New Jersey.
- * Mel the Mantis, who plays André, was discovered on Craigslist and it was immediately apparent that they were a star. They are a Chinese mantis (*Tenodere sinensis*), which is endemic to New York.
- * Features some of the actual butterflies captured by Russian author Vladimir Nabokov during his time at Cornell University (1948-1959). All of this was made possible thanks to Prof. Dr. Jason Dombroskie, who manages the Cornell University Insect Collection and the Insect Diagnostic Lab and hosted the crew in Ithaca.
- * Prof. Dr. Dombroskie also assisted the team in midnight “mothing” for this chapter. The large moths on the white sheet are Waved Sphinx moths (*ceratomia undulosa*), which unexpectedly showed up in droves.
- * Actor April Matthis provides all three voices in this chapter.
- * Most shots were composed using a split-focus diopter.
- * A Dutch copy of *Metamorphoses* is wielded as a weapon.

TRIVIA / Chapter VI, *The Pale Cloudless Sulphur*

- * Over 200 teal hornworm caterpillars were used. They were hand-raised in the director's apartment by his long-suffering partner.
- * Features snippets from two 1965 episodes of *The Jean Shepherd Show* which aired on WOR in New York.
- * The stamp that Hoover salesman Willy Tishen (Craig Mungavin) puts on his letter is of a praying mantis.
- * Three sets of blueprints were custom designed by Meredith Ries.
- * The vacuum is a 1960s Hoover Dial-A-Matic and we also see a Mothimizer attachment.
- * The main character is styled to look as if he emerged from a René Magritte painting, and visual references to the Belgian's surreal oeuvre abound.
- * Also inspired by dream logic in the cinematic work of Maya Deren and Luis Buñuel.

TRIVIA / Chapter VII, *The Fall*

- * The ferrymen Charon and Karon are twin brothers Max and Nicholas Weinbach. They are known for their stand-up comedy as the duo "Max and Nicky."
- * The film's director, Vito A. Rowlands, plays a Belgian actor who dies playing "Death" in an amateur stage play version of Ingmar Bergman's *Det sjunde inseglet* (The Seventh Seal; 1957).
- * The final shot was done in one take, as the light was fading on magic hour and the Panaflex's 1000 ft. magazine was about to run out. The rollout frame is incorporated as the final freeze frame.
- * Inspired by Alfred Hitchcock's *The Trouble with Harry* (1955)
- * Photographed in Ovid and Romulus, New York.

QUESTIONS & INQUIRIES

Vito A. Rowlands | vito@varowlands.com