

KINO LORBER

Presents



MURINA

A film by **Antoneta Alamat Kusijanovic**



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
CAMÉRA D'OR

OFFICIAL SELECTIONS

Cannes Film Festival (Directors' Fortnight); Toronto International Film Festival
MoMI First Look Festival

**Croatia, Brazil, USA, Slovenia | 2021 | 92 min | Color | 2.39:1 | In Croatian and English with
English subtitles**

Distributor Contact: Clemence Taillandier <clemence@kinolorber.com>

Publicity Contacts: Sara Sampson <sara@sampsonpr.co>

Kate Patterson <kpatterson@kinolorber.com>

Kino Lorber, Inc., 333 West 39 St. Suite 503, New York, 10018, (212) 629-6880

****WINNER****

Caméra D'or (Best First Film) – Cannes Film Festival 2021
Best Narrative Feature – Hamptons International Film Festival 2021

OFFICIAL SELECTIONS

Cannes Film Festival (Directors' Fortnight) • Toronto International Film Festival • MoMI First Look Festival (Opening Night Selection) • Hamptons International Film Festival • AFI European Union Film Showcase • Fort Lauderdale Int'l Film Festival • International Film Festival of Ottawa • Cleveland International Film Festival

“An exceptional debut...If Patricia Highsmith had ever written a coming-of-age story set on the rocky, clear-watered Croatian coastline, it might have looked a lot like Antoneta Alamat Kusijanović's bright, brooding debut. The perfect, darkly dazzling vehicle for a sunshine noir.”

– **Jessica Kiang, *Variety***

“A superb study in sustained subliminal menace... this tense drama takes aim at the patriarchy with sinister restraint.”

– **Tim Grierson, *Screen International***

“A vivid picture of a troubled paradise.” – **Steve Pond, *The Wrap***

“A sensory explosion. Masterful direction. Exquisite cinematography. An intoxicating deep dive into oppression, the taste of freedom.”

– **Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, *AWFJ***

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Tensions rise between restless teenager Julija and her oppressive father Ante when an old family friend arrives at their Croatian island home. As Ante attempts to broker a life-changing deal, their tranquil yet isolated existence leaves Julija wanting more from this influential visitor, who provides a taste of liberation over a weekend laid bare to desire and violence. Executive produced by Martin Scorsese, the film features outstanding camerawork by H  l  ne Louvart (*The Lost Daughter*, *Happy as Lazzaro*).

LONG SYNOPSIS

On a remote island along Croatia's Adriatic coast, 17-year-old Julija spends her days diving for eel with her domineering father Ante and watching other teens party on a nearby yacht. Julija bristles at Ante's heavy handed cruelty and resents her mother Nela's passivity. She longs for independence but is unsure how to achieve it, until the arrival of the rich and mysterious Javier seems to offer a way out. Javier is considering buying Ante's land to build a resort, which would allow the family to escape their island isolation for the city. Once Ante's employer and Nela's lover, Javier flirts shamelessly with Nela and Julija, setting off a subtle battle of hypermasculine one-upmanship that pushes Ante to humiliate and control Julija even more. Flattered by Javier's praise and stories of traveling the world, Julija sees him as the solution to all her problems. But does his affection portend freedom, or something more sinister? Winner of the Cam  ra d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, lensed by award-winning cinematographer H  l  ne Louvart (*The Lost Daughter*, *Never Rarely Sometimes Always*), and Executive Produced by Martin Scorsese, *Murina* features a ferocious, star-making central performance by Gracija Filipovi   and the most sumptuous images of the Mediterranean since *The Big Blue*. Equal parts fiery feminist outcry and stirring coming-of-age drama, the film announces director Antoneta Alamat Kusijanovi   as a major new talent in world cinema.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In *Murina* I wanted to explore the tensions of a family invaded by a foreigner, an outsider who propels a girl's inner power to confront the limitations of the mentality she's known her whole life.

The story is set in stark nature – where emotions are heightened and exposed to the sea, sun, and rocks as if on a plate, burning – where the senses tempt the physical world to merge inevitably with the spiritual.

Chauvinism is so deeply rooted in our society that we often mistake it for our cultural mentality. The father implements it because it suits him, the mother supports it because she is raised to do so.

For Julija, chauvinism is an antagonistic force so present as a response to her every action that she mistakes its boundaries for her own potential, until the outsider challenges it, until the cult of the father is stripped of its powers except for violence.

Julija lives in a physical paradise on a Croatian island but in a society obsessed with getting rich quickly by selling away its own essence, where a daughter's strength is mistaken for her father's weakness, and land's value is mistaken for profit.

Julija has an intuition for these dynamics, and for me, that is a divine spark I see in young girls. She is like the murina, the moray eel, an animal that will bite its own flesh to break herself free. Her power is her faith in herself, in nature, and in the unknown. Her power is that she refuses to be silenced.

– *Antoneta Alamat Kusijanovic*

DIRECTOR'S Q&A

Tell us a bit more about the story; how did the idea come to you?

I spent summers on the island with my grandmother and great-grandmother. I really feel the most natural in the water, that part of my childhood is very present in the film: the way of life, the respect for nature. The mentality the film is induced with, and the violence, is something I have discovered much later in people, yet chauvinism towards women is very present not only in Croatia but everywhere. I question why both men and women still encourage it with the new generation.

The film deals with power, sensuality, female empowerment and identity. Can you speak about this and why these themes were so important to you and to the story?

I feel women often either hide their powers to stay afloat or castrate it from their sensuality... the feminine. It is wrong to think women are either sensual or powerful - one doesn't exclude the other.

There is a stark contrast between Julija's real life and the natural paradise she lives in. Can you speak to how important the locations were to the story, and how you came to choose where you filmed?

We often imagine violence happens in poverty, dark allies, and ugly spaces, when violence towards women really happens everywhere. It was an important juxtaposition to the film that violence also brews in sunny and turquoise settings such as a Croatian island.

For the location I wanted to show nature that is beautiful but also cruel; the islands with no vegetation are stunning to watch but very hard to survive on. Their beauty is cruel and it burns you under the sun with no shelter; the characters have nowhere to hide, they are raw and exposed.

Water is important to me, the subconscious aspect of it, where Julija exorcises her emotions towards the men in her life, the father and the foreigner, both her violence and the emotional attachment. She even "births" herself passing through an underwater tunnel to find her freedom on the other side.

What did you enjoy most about filming; any favorite anecdotes from set?

I loved to shoot all the scenes with very little dialogue, where nature and people are in tension. I enjoy watching people fighting the nature within themselves, without a word, pure desire or anger. I also enjoyed shooting all the underwater sequences, both the night ones in the real caves where I used to play as a child and those in turquoise blue. They are real acting scenes happening underwater, not merely bodies swimming, and that was challenging and exciting at the same time.

What do you hope audiences take away from the film?

I hope the audience reconnects to the resilience and faith we had as young adults.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Gracija Filipović (Julija)

Gracija Filipović is a high school graduate from Dubrovnik. She was enrolled as an actress in theatre in Dubrovnik and in 2014 she shot her first film. Her biggest success so far is her main role in the award-winning short film *Into the Blue* by Antoneta Alamat Kusijanović, which won an award at the prestigious Berlinale Film Festival within the Generation programme, and the Heart of Sarajevo Award for Best Short Film.

She plays the main role in *Murina*, the debut feature by Antoneta Alamat Kusijanović, which will premiere in Director's Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival 2021. Apart from acting, Gracija is a professional swimmer and tap dancer.

Danica Čurčić (Nela)

Danica Čurčić is a multiple award-winning actress, and graduate of the Danish School of Performing Arts (2012) and The Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre in Los Angeles (2007).

Čurčić has starred in several stage roles at the Danish Royal Theatre, and in 2015 she took on the Italian monologue, "La Merda," for which she was nominated for a Reumert – the equivalent to a Tony Award. Her strong presence in Zentropa's feature *The Absent One* and Bille August's *Silent Heart* led to nominations at the Danish Academy Award and the Danish Critics Awards for Best Actress.

This led to her being selected as a Shooting Star at the 64th Berlin International Film Festival in 2014. In 2017 Čurčić got the title role in Birgitte Stærmose's feature film *Darling*, and for this powerful performance, Danica was nominated for both A Danish Academy Award and the Danish Critics Awards. In 2019 she starred in the award-winning drama *Out Stealing Horses*, directed by Hans Petter Moland. In 2020 Čurčić played the lead in Netflix's Danish miniseries "Equinox" and will next be seen in another Netflix series "The Chestnut Man". She has also just wrapped Lars von Trier's *Exodus*, which will premiere in late 2022.

Leon Lučev (Ante)

Leon Lučev was born in Šibenik, Croatia in 1970. During his studies in 1994, he shot his first feature film *Kako je počeo rat na mom otoku* (*How the war started on my island*) with director Vinko Brešan, which became a fast success.

While studying, he worked with Lukas Nola, Zvonimir Jurić, and Ognjen Sviličić in their early films. In 1997, after graduation from the Academy of Dramatic Art, he joined the permanent cast of the ITD Theatre. In 2003 he left the ITD Theatre and started acting exclusively in film, working with a number of current European and regional film artists including: Hans-Christian Schmidt, Jasmila Žbanić, Hrvoje Hribar, Vinko Brešan, Lukas Nola, Angelina Jolie, Zrinko Ogresta, Branko Schmidt, Janez Burger, and others.

Lučev took part in regional co-productions and shoots in Croatia, Bosnia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Germany and Hungary, and is currently teaching within Sarajevo Talent Campus, Academy of Arts in Split and Dr. Ante Peterlić Media Culture School.

Cliff Curtis (Javier)

Clifford Vivian Devon Curtis is a New Zealand born actor with film credits including *Once Were Warriors* (1994), *Three Kings* (1999), *Blow* (2001), *Training Day* (2001), *Whale Rider* (2002), *Sunshine* (2007), *Live Free or Die Hard* (2007) and *The Dark Horse* (2014), for which he won the Best Performance by an Actor award at the 2014 Asia Pacific Screen Awards.

Curtis' television slate includes roles on NBC's "Trauma" and ABC's "Body of Proof" and "Missing." From 2015 to 2017, Curtis portrayed Travis Manawa on the AMC series "Fear the Walking Dead."

FILMMAKERS' BIOGRAPHY

Antoneta Alamat Kusijanovic – Writer/Director

Antoneta Alamat Kusijanovic is a writer-director born in Dubrovnik and currently based in New York.

Her short *Into the Blue*, was nominated for a Student Academy Award, and won awards at the Berlin International Film Festival, Sarajevo Film Festival, Oberhausen Film Festival, and the Festival de Premier Plans, Angers, among many others.

Antoneta's first feature film *Murina* developed with support from the Résidence du Festival Cannes, Cinéfondation, First Films First by the Goethe-Institut, and Jerusalem Film Lab is produced by Martin Scorsese Sikelia, RT features and Antitalent.

Antoneta holds an MA from Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb and an MFA in screenwriting and directing from Columbia University in New York. Antoneta is an alumna of the Berlinale Talent Lab, Sarajevo Talent Lab, La Femis Producing Atelier, and the Marcie Bloom Fellowship and is a member of the Academy.

Hélène Louvart (AFC) – Director of Photography

Selected Filmography

- 2021 – *Murina*** Dir. Antoneta Alamat Kusijanovic
- 2021 – *The Lost Daughter*** Dir. Maggie Gyllenhaal
- 2020 – *Never Rarely Sometimes Always*** Dir. Eliza Hittman
- 2019 – *Invisible Life*** Dir. Karim Aïnouz
- 2018 – *Happy as Lazzaro*** Dir. Alice Rohrwacher
- 2011 – *Pina*** Dir. Win Wenders
- 2011 – *Corpo Celeste*** Dir. Alice Rohrwacher
- 2008 – *The Beaches of Agnès*** Dir. Agnès Varda
- 2004 – *Ma Mère*** Dir. Christophe Honoré
- 2002 – *A Piece of Sky*** Dir. Bénédicte Liénard
- 2001 – *The Milk of Human Kindness*** Dir. Dominique Cabrer
- 1996 – *Will It Snow for Christmas?*** Dir. Sandrine Veysset

CREDITS

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| Directed by | Antoneta Alamat Kusijanović |
| Screenplay by | Antoneta Alamat Kusijanović Frank Graziano |
| Story by | Antoneta Alamat Kusijanović |
| Director of Photography | Hélène Louvart (AFC) |
| Underwater Cinematographer | Zoran Mikinčić-Budin |
| Editor | Vladimir Gojun |
| Original Compositions | Evgueni Galperine Sacha Galperine |
| Casting | Timka Grin |
| Sound Designer | Julij Zornik |
| Production Designer | Ivan Veljača |
| Costume Designer | Amela Bakšić |
| Producers | Danijel Pek, Rodrigo Teixeira |
| Executive Producers | Martin Scorsese Emma Tillinger Koskoff Lourenço Sant'Anna Sophie Mas Rodrigo Gutierrez Carmem Maia Gustavo Rosa de Moura |

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Duration: 92 min

Aspect Ratio: 2.39:1

Format: 2K

Sound: 5.1

Year: 2021

A Kino Lorber Release.

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