

ely
 film
 society
 feb
 2019
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 notes

coming up
@ kings lynn

- SOCIAL EVENT Thursday 1st March 7pm: **Fun Film Quiz**
- SOCIAL EVENT Thursday 14th March 6pm: **Pre-Film Meal**
- FILM Thursday 14th March 7.30pm: **COLD WAR**
- FILM CLOSE-UPS Thursday 21st 7pm: **Songs, Soundtrack Albums and Psychedelia: Film Scoring in the 1960s**

further details klcc.uk

Archipelago

Joanna Hogg, UK 2010

Script by Joanna Hogg

Christopher Baker Christopher
 Kate Fahy Patricia
 Tom Hiddleston Edward
 Andrew Lawson Head Gardener
 Lydia Leonard Cynthia
 Amy Lloyd Rose
 Mike Pender Lobster fisherman

Produced by Edward Charlton ,
 Gayle Griffiths and Kiyoshi Nomura
 Line producer Luke Schiller

Cinematography by Ed Rutherford
 Film Editing by Helle le Fevre
 Casting By Lucy Bevan
 Production Design by Stéphane
 Collonge
 Art Direction by Sonya Yu
 Costume Design by Stéphane
 Collonge

It's fine. It's fine. Except it's anything but fine. The fine line between fine and not at all fine, the way a certain sort of English person uses it, is the core theme of *Archipelago*, which homes in on the partial reunion of a family in a once-loved holiday home in the Scilly Isles where long-suppressed personal tensions surge to the surface despite every genteel impulse.

We're possibly not meant to like the



Knighton family much. Son Edward (Tom Hiddleston doing his quiet-anguished routine) is about to spend a year in Africa teaching personal sexual health, leaving behind a doubtful relationship and a lot of equivocation about his self-worth. Daughter Cynthia is spring-tight with sibling rivalry and seemingly without her own direction in life. Mother Patricia is trying to suppress the angst by taking up painting classes with Christopher, a floating muse whose vapourings about art nevertheless give way to concern about Edward's evident crisis

of confidence. Absent is father Will, who possibly saw something coming and ducked out of the firing line: the phone call where Patricia suddenly addresses him as *William* in a strangled voice speaks volumes about English disappointment in very few words.

And then there is Rose. Hired in as housekeeper/cook from which she clearly needs the money, she hovers on the edge of family matters, serving their material needs (something they are clearly used to without quite wanting to admit how it makes them appear) and watching the tense

dynamic unfold. Edward watches her ever more closely, clearly finding something attractive in her simple practicality and something fascinating in the (modest) class divide it reveals. She cooks lobster, pheasant, salmon; they eat it. Food is privilege and guilt to the Knightons and the film's scenes away from the family's enervating stillness are to do with simple rustic exploits in fishing and hunting, to which Rose relates and Edward eyes with embarrassed curiosity. The Knightons know what they expect but not really how it gets there.

It's fine. It's fine. This is Patricia's repeated riff at the film's first excruciating moment, in a restaurant at which they may or may not have been served undecoded woodcock, to which Cynthia takes exception. Others always do the wrong in her world. (*Stop being so nice* is about the first thing she says to Edward as he tries to work out how Rose fits into the scheme of things).

Joanna Hogg's style, established over her trio of films so far (a fourth, *The Souvenir*, is due a UK release soon), is intensely cool and minimal, a long way from the TV in which she gained her experience. ("I wanted to make a film doing everything I was told not to do in television" she averred in an *Independent* interview about her first feature, *Unrelated* [2008] also starring Hiddleston). . There is no music track. The camera is always static, squarely framed almost like an architecture magazine, and actors walk in and out of shot. Hers is a cinema of spaces in which people are the tense problem. In the most recent release, *Exhibition* [2015] the house is the star, a smooth modernist villa in North London in which a couple rattle and wriggle, trying to find who they are there even as they arrange to move out. In *Archipelago* the house is a stack of tasteful grey and white voids, full of ghastly good taste with no sign of personalty. It could be anywhere, ideally suited for the comfort of citizens of seemingly nowhere. The family stomp and squirm up and down stairs and corridors, as Rose near-silently floats by in the background. Hogg's films are a ballet of body language: even in the oddly unenjoyable picnic among the rocks, it is clear who fits and who doesn't, just by angles of head and leg. (Viv

Albertine took this a stage further in *Exhibition* by treating the house as a para-erotic dance space, finding arousal on one floor while Liam Gillick sat unmoving on another level altogether).

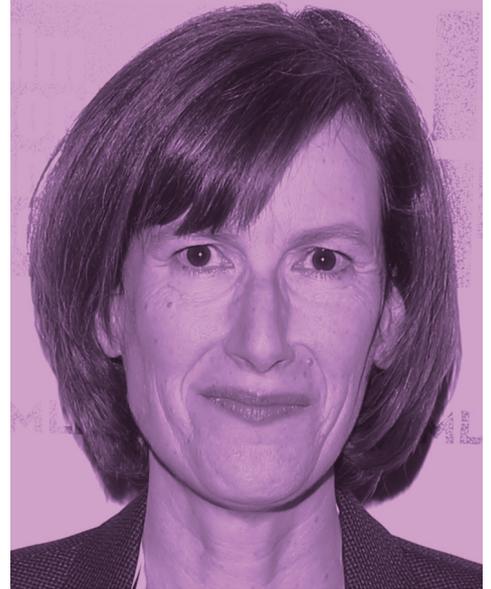
Another Hogg trope, misused by many directors eager to make an impact with "technique" (though Robert Altman mastered it to huge effect in the 1970s) is the density of ambient soundtrack, in particular stereo placement of sounds from offscreen. Hogg's are films you have to *hear*. The island's weather is ever present, often loud and rough. The people are mostly quiet but their world does all the raging for them. (Enjoy the startling final shot, by the way). Again, *Exhibition* takes this to a new level, with a deep layered soundtrack that pinpoints the small locating sounds of a domestic space and contrasts them with the unsettling racket of North London's streets outside. Sound design this deep and focused is rare in an age of banging surround sound and compressed loudness.

Hogg came from a non-oblique background into film making. A chance encounter with Derek Jarman in a branch of Patisserie Valerie led her to borrow his Super 8 camera - she was already a photographer - which got her a place at the NFTS, followed by a directing career on episodes of *London Bridge*, *Casualty* and *London's Burning*. She also directed the EastEnders special *EastEnders: Dot's Story* [2003].

Archipelago is being shown by EFS on its own merits as a fine piece of modern British cinema in the realist tradition, but also as part of our commitment since the beginning to ensure that each season contains at least one film directed by a woman. Left to its own devices, cinema can tend towards the blokey, loud and exhibitionist; Hogg's quiet rise is maybe a symptom that "women directors", too long a sneering pejorative, are having their proper moment. Her own loyalty to a past generation was shown in her curating of an exhibition in 2015 at the Ambika P3 Gallery devoted to the cinema of Belgian film maker Chantal Akerman (1950-2015), too long known as the most respected director (amongst other directors) you've never heard of.

JOANNA HOGG

Born March 20, 1960 London



You have a very distinct eye when it comes to training your camera... it's long takes and a minimalist approach. What made you decide to take that approach? Did someone inspire you? Or was that all your own?

I think it happened quite naturally. I don't think I thought of it that clearly beforehand. But I was interested in shooting scenes from a particular distance. I've always been really interested in dance films, actually, and how certainly dance films from the past – films like *The Bandwagon* – often used to shoot quite wide so that you could see, particularly because it was dance, the movement of the dancers and the actors within a particular wide frame. I think that is relevant to what I'm doing because I'm interested in the dance of people and the way people interact with each other. I think if you cut things always to a close up or a medium shot you don't see what the rest of the body is doing. So, I think a lot of the story is told in how the characters are moving and how they move with each other within the frame. I think if you cut too quickly you don't get time to see those things.

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**NEXT MONTH'S FILM IS
THE GREAT BEAUTY
(Paolo Sorrentino, Italy 2013)
Monday 18 March 2019**

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