

Highlights From Tom Fordâ??s TIFF Interview About His New Film, â??Nocturnal Animalsâ?•

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

By Anjli Patel

Nocturnal Animals, the second feature length film directed by Tom Ford, centers on a manâ??s cathartic, vengeful healing process in the aftermath of a great love lost. Taking the form of a story-within-a-story, Ford employs precise visuals â?? a skill mastered in his day job as a fashion designer â?? to segue from one story to the other.

Set simultaneously in the upper echelons of Los Angeles and barren West Texas, these distinct backdrops symbolize the great divide that Susan, Amy Adamsâ?? art dealer character, perceives between her and Edward, her novelist ex-husband played by Jake Gyllenhaal. Susanâ??s inability to reconcile her needs and desires is the cause of her unhappiness and the coupleâ??s demise. However, nearly two decades later when she has long since moved on with her life, Susan is forced to come to terms with that relationship when she unexpectedly receives a novel written by Edward and dedicated to her.

The film is emotionally gripping and at times difficult to watch, a departure from the melancholy *A Single Man*, Fordâ??s directorial debut, which seven years ago also premiered in North America at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). Last week following the second screening of Nocturnal Animals, Ford sat down with Cameron Bailey, the artistic director of TIFF, to discuss the film at length. Below are highlights from their conversation.

Ford on the role of style in his films:

â??I think because of my other life [as a fashion designer] people usually gravitate to style. In filmmaking unless [style] serves a purpose and helps tell the story, itâ??s not important. Substance is for me whatâ??s important.â?•

Ford on the take home message of the film:

â??When you find someone in your life, someone thatâ??s important to you, someone who you connect to, donâ??t let them go. Hold on.â?•

Ford on fueling consumption:

â??Style really has to serve a character, and so there is a real purpose for Susanâ??s very pristine, cold life. I think itâ??s something that our society and our culture constantly tells you, â??this is going to make you happy; youâ??ll be happy if you have this, youâ??ll be happy if you have thatâ?? and in my other life I am one of those people responsible for doing that, but Iâ??m very divided about it. I grew up in New Mexico in a much simpler way. Whenever I can, I escape to my house there, to the desert, to the sky, and I feel much more in touch with the earth, and the planet, and why weâ??re here. And so it is something that I struggle with.â?•

Ford on the West Texas narrative in the film:

â??I have a couple of lives. I grew up in Texas. I know West Texas very well. I have so many cousins there. I lead a life in Los Angeles, in London, but I also have a ranch in New Mexico. I ride horses, I have cattle, I know that world very well, and what I wanted to do was contrast those two worlds â?? Susanâ??s slick, cold world is colored in a way that is very blue-toned, itâ??s very cold. Yet when we have color in her world, itâ??s quite sharp and quite garish, whereas the inner novel is green, the colors are different, theyâ??re deeper, theyâ??re richer, and then of course her flashback. I think often when many of us remember the past, itâ??s very vivid and warm because we have a tendency, at least I do, to remember the past in a nostalgic way.â?•

Ford on Amy Adams:

â??Editing Amy, there is not a bad take, a bad moment. She does so much with her face, she is a spectacular actress. â?¦ I would say [Amy is] one of the best actresses working today who can tell â?? she telegraphs with her face what sheâ??s feeling. And I find Amyâ??s eyes incredibly soulful. â?¦ If you know Amy and look into her eyes, you canâ??t help but feel something, and I wanted that to really come through in the part of Susan.â?•

Ford on the art in the opening scene:

â??All of the art in the film is real. The original artists let us use their work. I usually donâ??t like a film about the art world where the art is fake because somehow it doesnâ??t have the same emotion that real art does. [The art in the opening scene] is the one and only piece of art that I created because I had to imagine myself, â??okay, Iâ??m an artist, and what is it that I want to say.â?? Iâ??ve lived in Europe for the last 27 years, so I decided, â??alright, Iâ??ll tell a European perspective of where America is today.â??

I think America used to be thought of as kind of a country of beautiful, tanned, tits and ass, Farah Fawcett in a little red swimsuit, all teeth and hair, and I think a lot of the world today thinks of America as gluttonous, overfed, aging, decaying in a sense. And that was my original intention, which is why these women are wearing little bits and pieces of Americana. So I wanted to create a sort of absurd, conceptual art because Amy then later says everything is junk, our culture is junk.

However, that completely changed. I shot these women â?? they were the most beautiful people. They were so free, they were so excited, they were so happy, they were so joyful, and I fell in love with them. I fell in love with everything about them. And I realized after I shot them that in a sense they were a microcosm of what I was trying to say about the world. â?¦ Theyâ??re so glad to be here, and itâ??s because they have let go of our perception of what theyâ??re supposed to be, and that is what is trapping Amyâ??s character Susan â?? sheâ??s trying so hard to be what she thinks she is supposed to be, and sheâ??s miserable. And these women were so joyful because theyâ??ve let go of that. Theyâ??ve let go of this idea of what weâ??re supposed to be. And so [the art] became something quite different in the film.â?•

(Source: http://www.papermag.com)

Photo by Joe Schildhorn/BFA.com

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Date Created
September 27, 2016
Author
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