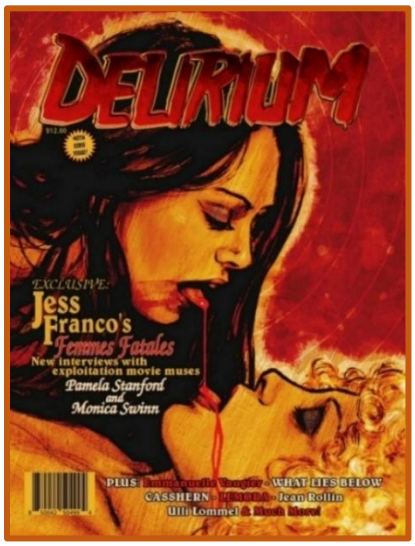
Heroines of Shadow and Light

Jess Franco Film Icons

Pamela Stanford and Monica Swinn Reflect

By Michael Orlando Yaccarino



The article and interviews were first published as a cover story in ***Delirium*** magazine (Issue #40/February 2025) in abbreviated form. This **Complete Version** includes **alternate photos**, **extensive footnotes**, **select bibliography**, and **image gallery** [See related **Image Gallery** PDF at this site]. The author welcomes and appreciates any corrections and additions—as well as credit should any perspectives and research findings particular to this study be reproduced elsewhere.

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About the Footnotes

Release years listed for films and individuals' births and/or deaths are based on available sources at time of publication and are subject to revision and additional confirmation. The film titles listed are mainly original theatrical titles for their country of origin—while for others, a film's more well-known title is included for clarification. The Stanford and Swinn interviews were conducted during 2023-25. The research is ongoing which may result in revised versions of this posted work.

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This work is dedicated to Scot D. Ryersson (1960-2024).

A man who once bargained his very own daughter for worldly success must now honor the diabolical pact which made that prosperity possible. The unwary are enslaved in hidden dungeons wherein their secrets are extracted through a variety of strange elixirs. Secluded in a seaside palace, a brooding woman's peculiar bond with an identical twin sister held captive under lock and key culminates in lethal tragedy. Surely, such enchanted scenarios are more redolent of centuries-old fairy tale than plotlines for *cinema bis*[1] productions of the 20th century's last quarter. And yet these are indeed the narrative bases for three outstanding works of the mid-1970s by renegade Spanish filmmaker Jess Franco[2].

As a creative young man passionate about the arts, Franco was desperate to experience life outside the restrictive confines of his homeland's dictatorship under its barbaric leader Generalissimo Francisco Franco. Indeed, the repressive Spanish State was established when Jess was a six-year-old child in 1936. Following the liberation of Paris from German Occupation in August 1944, World War II ended officially approximately a year later. Jess had become increasingly determined to immerse himself in the French capital's flourishing cultural scene, especially in the realms of art, music, and film. And then finally following academic studies in Spain, including law and film school training—and adventures as a semiprofessional musician[3]—he did so.

Once settled in Paris in the early 1950s, Franco quickly became a screening room *habitué* at the *Cinémathèque française*[4] where he viewed countless titles of every genre. He was not alone delighting most especially in films featuring outlandish situations whose makers were unconcerned with verisimilitude. Film scholar Virginie Sélavy has identified a direct correlation between the harrowing living conditions then endured relatively recently by the French public during the occupancy and an associated appetite for temporary escape provided by the movies—and most particularly via the subgenre of the *fantastique* film. Sélavy observes:

> French cinema has always been lauded for its works of dramatic realism, but from the medium's earliest days a on the has flourished, incorporating elements of fantasy, horror and science fiction into bizarre, atmospheric tales in which the unexplained and the supernatural intrude into reality. Following its first manifestations in the magical illusions

[1] The French term *cinema bis* refers to non-mainstream genre film productions, especially in reference to those made in the 1960s and 1970s. Although the word *bis* has several meanings, perhaps most apropos here are those indicating a diversion, detour, or alternate route.

[2] Jesús Franco Manera (1930-2013).

[3] Although not a graduate from this national film school, Franco did attend the Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematograficas (IIEC) which had been founded in 1947 under the regime of Generalissimo Francisco Franco. The belief exists that the genuine purpose of such governmental initiative was to monitor the rise of potentially dissident artistic voices.

[4] The *Cinémathèque française* presented a career-wise retrospective of Franco's work entitled "*Fragments d'une filmographie impossible*" (June 18-July 31, 2008).

> of Georges Méliès, the *fantastique* flourished during the German occupation, reached its poetic heights in the films of Jean Cocteau and Georges Franju, and was revitalized in the post-New Wave 1970s and beyond.[5]

Franco's memoirs provide an analogous note regarding his frequent museum and gallery going: "*…quedé absolutamente subyugado por los surrealistas*…" (…I was absolutely captivated by the surrealists…).[6] To be sure, his interlude in France was marked by financial impoverishment somewhat similar to what he had known in Spain. Yet this was more than compensated for by the consciousness-expanding outcome of such artistic immersion while in the liberated country. And this would become assimilated into a deeply informed and richly sophisticated cinematic vision of distinct idiosyncrasy. Hazarding a facile conjecture, Franco would become capable of constructing through fiercely unfettered and truly independent filmmaking a chimerical, sensory world denied him by the rigid societal strictures of his own childhood.

Although referring to textual work, comments by literary theorist and philosopher Tzvetan Todorov[7] can be applied readily to film. Following are two of his elucidations on the *fantastique* absolutely relevant to Franco's imaginal universe.

> The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.…the function of the supernatural is to exempt the text from the action of the law, and thereby to transgress that law.[8]

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[5] Virgnie Sélavy, "Fantastique: the dream worlds of French cinema," *Sight and Sound*, no. 28, November 2018, 42-7. In a 1990 interview, Franco cites directors Fritz Lang and Jean Rollin as preeminent masters specifically of the fantastic cinema. Franco's citations appear respectively as follows: "[Jean] Rollin has made some interesting things in the fantastic cinema," and "For me, one of the great masters of the fantastic cinema is Fritz Lang." Donald Farmer, "The World According to Franco," *Fangoria*, February 1990, 54 and 56. Fritz Lang (1890-1976): In addition to such unequivocally fantastic works as *Destiny* (1921) and *Liliom* (1934), many of the Vienna-born international director's films contain elements identifying this cinematic categorization, most notably his Mabuse crime series. Jean Rollin (1938-2010): The overwhelming majority of the French director's entire oeuvre is explicitly fantastic. on Jean Rollin below.

[6] Jesús Franco, *Memorias del Tío Jess* (Madrid: Punto de Lectura S.L., 2004), 139.

[7] Tzvetan Todorov (1939-2017). The comments included by the French/Bulgarian author originate from his 1970 work published originally as *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*.

[8] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 25.

The preceding statement can pertain easily to such pivotal Franco characters as Lorna Green, *Succubus* (1968)[9]; Jimmy Logan, *Venus in Furs* (1968)[10], and Christina, *A Virgin Among the Living Dead* (1971)[11]—all of whom journey through liminal netherworlds governed by fairy tale, associative dream logic very much in the surrealist tradition.[12]

> Yet it would be wrong to claim that the fantastic can exist only in a part of the work, for here are certain texts which sustain their ambiguity to the very end, i.e., even beyond the narrative itself. The book closed, the ambiguity persists.[13]

The finales of the same three films suggest at most incomplete explanations as to what might have transpired earlier in them. Yet ultimately, each remains hermetic in not completely resolving its own enigmas. Repeat viewings yield variable interpretations applicable to a single Franco film as well as organically across many of his works simultaneously. Alas, clearcut analysis is eluded by an experience similar to awaking from a reverie when inadequate intellectualizations slip away leaving one with a sense of tantalizing mystery.

By whatever medium through which it is related or in the form it takes, a fantastic narrative is only as successful as its central character is convincing. Overwhelmingly, Franco's cinematic universe is dominated by powerful and often deadly female characters who are catalytic to and

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[9] French Actress Janine Reynaud (1930-2018) plays the role of Lorna Green in this film also known as *Necronomicon*. Among other Franco films, she co-stars with Argentine actress Rosanna Yanni (b. 1938) in the pair of lighthearted "Red Lips" ("Rote Lippen) adventure-crime films *Kiss Me Monster* (*Bésame monstruo*) and *Sadisterotica* both released in 1969.

[10] The role of Jimmy Logan is played by American actor-singer James Darren (1936-2024). While this film has been alternately known as *Paroxismus*, Franco preferred its shooting title *Black Angel*. Darren's genre work includes the original trio of *Gidget* films (1959-63), *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), and *The Time Tunnel* series (1966-67). He also provided his singing talents for the animated feature *Hey, There, It's Yogi Bear!* (1964), as well as both speech and song for the character of Jimmy Darrock for the episode "Surfin' Fred" (1965)of *The Flintstones* original animated series (1960-66).

[11] Actress Christina von Blanc who plays the role of Christina Bentham (or Reiner) had already shot Franco's *Jungfrauen-Report* (1971) earlier that same year. In 1973, she performs a supporting part in the Spanish cult horror favorite *La campana del infierno* (*The Bell from Hell*). The latter, eerily presciently titled film was directed partially by Claudio Guerín (1939-1973) who died accidentally on set from a fall from the bell tower set and then completed by Juan Antonio Bardem (1922-2002), uncle to actor Javier Bardem (b. 1969).

[12] Curator of Artists' Moving Image at the BFI National Archive, William Fowler defines the "mythopoetic" tradition in film as "a defiantly non-realist mode that explored trance states and desire," exemplifying this by the works of American experimental filmmakers Maya Deren (1917-1961; Ukranian-born) and Kenneth Anger (1927-2023). Franco's work certainly embodies this cinematic approach. *Gothic: The Dark Heart of Film*, ed. James Bell (London: BFI, 2013), 67.

[13] Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, 43.

take control of the action. The director was exceptionally savvy in casting them with appropriate performers.

Two outstanding actors in this gallery of inimitable *femmes fatales* is Pamela Stanford and Monica Swinn. During one of the most fruitfully satisfying periods of Franco's illustrious career in the mid-1970s, these woman exceled in a variety of indelible roles whether central or supporting. In the following two exclusive interviews, the still enchanting Stanford and Swinn provide behind-the-scenes illumination on the director's methods during the making of several key works in the Franco filmography, as well as discuss their own vital contributions in creating *fantastique* personas still captivating more than a half-century later. And how very curious that each liken their shooting experiences with Franco as taking part in a dream.

Shooting* Lorna...The Exorcist*: Jacqueline Laurent (left), Jess Franco (right), and Guy Delorme (center)

Pamela Stanford

on

Lorna...The Exorcist (1974) aka ***Les Possédées du diable***
and ***Das Frauenhaus*** (1977) aka ***Blue Rita***

French actor Pamela Stanford was born Monique Sylvaine Delaunay in the town of Fontainebleau, southeast of Paris. From the early 1970s through the mid-1980s, she appeared in numerous independent European film productions. Stanford is best known for multiple works made with Jess Franco in a variety of roles ranging from unrelentingly intense to effervescently whimsical.[14] She can also be seen in Bruno Gantillon's *Morgane et ses nymphes* (1971), Claude Lelouch's *Toute une vie* (1974), Gilles Grangier's *Gross Paris* (1974), Yvan Chiffre's *Bons Baisers de Hong Kong* (1975), Claude Bernard-Aubert's *L'aigle et la colombe* (1977), and opposite Brigitte Lahaie in Patrice Rhomm's *Touchez pas au zizi* (1978).[15] Alluring as ever, she continues to enjoy *la vie d'un artiste* in a small village of central France where this passionate animal lover creates fine art, appears in avant-garde film projects while inspiring the creative work of others.[16] Stanford shares her memories on the making of two important Franco titles for which she provided exceptional performances.

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[14] In a 2010 interview with Jess Franco conducted by Stephen Thrower appearing in his book *Murderous Passions: The Delirious Cinema of Jesús Franco* (Volume 1: 1959-1974), the director characterizes Pamela Stanford as "very cultivated." Although not a definitive list, the actress appeared in the following Franco directed films: *Les Gloutonnes*/*Les Exploits érotiques de Maciste dans l'Atlantide* (1973), *Le Miroir obscene*/*Al otro lado del espejo* (1973), *Célestine… bonne à tout faire* (1974), *Lorna… l'exorcist*/*Les Possédées du diable* (1974), *Les Chatouilleuses* (1974), *Le Jouisseur* (1974), *Les Grandes Emmerdeuses* (1974), *Das Frauenhaus*/*Blue Rita* (1977), *Die Teuflischen Schwestern*/*Satanic Sisters* (1977), *Les Cannibales* (1979), as well as *Razzia sur le plaisir* (1975-76) reputedly directed by Marius and Daniel Lesoeur, with uncredited assistance by Franco. While during this interview Stanford specified *Célestine…* as her first film shot for Franco, she also stated not knowing of the existence of *Razzia*…. Furthermore, the actress questioned Lesoeur's directing of the latter film for which Franco has been credited pseudonymously as "Adolf M. Frank." She also made several corrections to her filmography—that she had no involvement in the shooting of Franco's *La Comtesse perverse* (1973); how she has been sometimes erroneously credited as the Director of Photography for *Elsa Fräulein SS*/*Captive Women 4* (1977) by French director Patrice Rhomm's (1931-1923); and while the cabaret performer seen in the film's advertising clips is an uncharacteristically blonde Monica Swinn, the singing voice is that of Stanford herself in the role of Gundrun. Additionally, Stanford did not serve as producer or cinematographer for her more recent work with French director Alexander H. Mathis (b. 1948), such as *Outre Tombe*/*Haunted Earth* (2018), *Lady Usher's Diary* (2022), and *Vampyr* (2023). See note on Ludovic Leprêtre below.

[15] In a 2017 onscreen interview by French film historian and producer Lucas Balbo and filmmaker Merrill Aldighieri included on multiple digital releases of *Lorna…*, Stanford references being an extra on an unspecified production directed by prolific French filmmaker José Bénazéraf (1922-2012), whose artistically erotic works include *Le Désirable et le Sublime* (1969), *Frustration* (1971), and *Les Phantasmes de Miss Jones* (1986). "Meet Pamela Stanford," interview by Lucas Balbo and Merrill Aldighieri, *Lorna…The Exorcist* (1974) [Blue-ray], Kino Lorber, 2023.

[16] In 2024, contemporary electronic composer Ludovic Leprêtre (Sona Nyl; b. 1977) released the music track "*Notes cristallines de la démone*" as a homage to Stanford. Describing the work as "a sensory and sidereal journey,"

Michael Orlando Yaccarino: **Shall we begin with any little-known facts about you?**

Pamela Stanford: *Let's see…* When I was fourteen years old, I served as model for a painting by novelist Patricia Highsmith.[17] She often vacationed in Fontainebleau by staying at the house of an American friend who knew my father. When this friend discovered that my father had been a circus performing for acts involving horses, he hired him to care for those animals on his stud farm.

Pamela Stanford at approx. two years of age (Pamela Stanford Collection)

Leprêtre explains its genesis: "The project is quite simple. Pamela has a supernatural aura. As a solo musician, I wanted to make a tribute for her. So I made this piece while viewing the cemetery photographs of her shot by Alexandre H. Mathis in 1976. The music came naturally and took me three days and nights to complete. I think it has a *giallo* film feel about it. When I sent my music to Pamela, she was not only touched by it, but actually created its title." The composition's accompanying video features Mathis' related photographs. Stanford specifies in reference to her naming the track: "After some deep contemplation, I arrived at a sort of anagram derived from my name Monique Delaunay resulting in the inclusion of '*démone*' or 'demoness' which perfectly suits the music in my opinion. And how fittingly paradoxical than that Ludovic's surname 'Leprêtre'—that is '*Le prêtre*'—means 'The priest'." See note on Alexandre H. Mathis above. The track was released in 2025 as part of *The Sixth Configuration*, a compilation of post-industrial music from Poland-based *Santa Sangre Magazine*. Stanford participated in the short film *The Hanging Doll* (2025/Filmiracle Productions) by Luciano Imperoli—pseudonym for Chris Milewski who directed and provided other production credits for the work under additional aliases. According to Milewski, the work is inspired by the 1980s Italian horror genre defined by directors Lucio Fulci (1927-1996) and Joe D'Amato (Aristide Massaccesi/1936-1999). A genuine black and white photo of Stanford as a toddler is returned to with ominous ambiguity repeatedly throughout the film (See photo above).

[17] The work of American writer Patricia Highsmith (1921-1995) includes the psychological thriller novels *Strangers on a Train* (1950) and *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955), both made into successful films—the first by Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) in 1951 and the second twice by René Clément (1913-1996) as *Plein Soleil*/*Purple Noon* in 1960 and Anthony Minghella (1954-2008) in 1999. Early in her career, Highsmith worked as a visual artist and maintained that interest throughout her life. Stanford also posed for noted French painter Paul Aïzpiri (1919-2016).

MOY: **How did you first become involved in film?**

PS: A journey that began as a performer at the Folies Bèrgere[18] in Paris.

MOY: **Were there necessary requirements?**

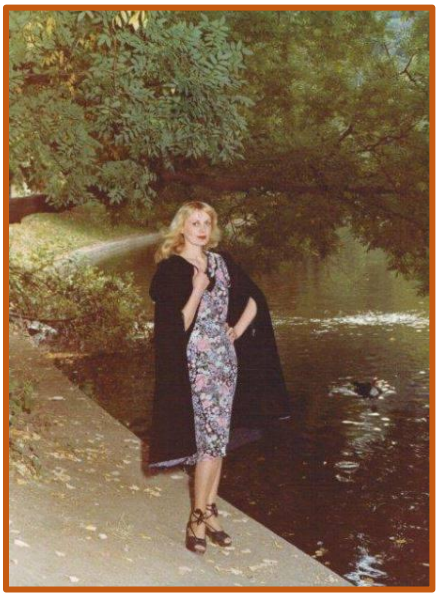
PS: Absolutely! Most essential were the size and shape of the breasts! While mine were very firm indeed, I did have to undergo dance training before they would hire me. I also found work as a model for quite a few fascinating photographers.

MOY: **Such as?**

PS: There were many. Among them, I posed for André Belorgey, André Nisak, Guy Bourdin, and Serge Jacques.[19]

MOY: **Masters of *l'érotique*!**

PS: Yes! Serge was known as the "pope" of sexy photography!



Pamela Stanford modeling in Parc des Buttes Chaumont, Paris (Pamela Stanford Collection)

[18] This iconic cabaret music hall located at 32 Rue Richer in the 9th Arrondissement of Paris is still in operation today since its original opening in 1869.

[19] André Belorgey (1925-2009). André Nisak (?-?). Guy Bourdin (1928-1991). Serge Jacques (1927-?). Stanford corrects the occasionally noted biographical entry of her posing for the French economic and political periodical *Le Figaro* in which she never appeared.

MOY: **How did your transition from still image to moving pictures come about?**

PS: My model work resulted in becoming a film extra. But now that I think of it, this might be just the moment for a little story in some small way perhaps connecting the two.

MOY: **Please!**

PS: I was once hired to participate in a rather unusual way for a book launch event. Ange Bastiani[20] who wrote many detective novels had the idea of a provocatively dressed girl—actually, nearly nude—appearing at the restaurant where the party was to take place. So a car dropped me off near the agreed upon location. And then I caused quite a commotion running almost naked along the street to my destination where Bastiani and several photographers were awaiting my arrival.

MOY: ***Brava!*** **That's a way to make an entrance!**

PS: *Merci!*

MOY: **Now, onto the cinema! Which title do you prefer and why:** ***Lorna...The Exorcist*** **or** ***Les Possédées du diable*****?**

PS: I prefer *Lorna... The Exorcist*. To me, it sounds better to the ear! Just as with the mythological figure of Lilith, both are typically considered demonic or vampiric by the general public. But for me, such characterization depends on one's personal perspective. You know, there are indeed good and generous demons…

MOY: **Do you recall how you became involved in this production?**

PS: Around the early 1970s, I often visited the film production offices concentrated around the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris to submit my photos. They would ask: "So what have you done?" Being naïve, I'd reply: "Not too much. I come from the countryside…and I would like to appear in your next film." While sometimes I'd receive nothing more than a smile, I was contacted quite often for work as an extra. One special day, my phone rang. I heard a voice as sweet as a melody saying: "I am Mdm. Meunier, secretary of Le Comptoir Français de Productions Cinématographiques. Our producer M. Robert de Nesle wishes to meet you."[21] The appointment

[20] Ange Bastiani was the penname of French author Victor Maurice Élie Jean Le Page (1918-1977) whose more than thirty year career specializing in crime novels began in the 1950s. Not only was Bastiani's work adapted for both film and television, but he also appeared as an actor in several films.

[21] In a 2010 interview by Lucas Balbo and Merrill Aldighieri for a release of *Lorna…*, French director and editor Gérard Kikoïne describes a Mme Chanou as an exceedingly protective personal secretary to Robert de Nesle.

was made for the very next day. I met with this elegant man who put me immediately at ease. Robert said: "You are absolutely perfect for the main character of my next film, *Lorna... The Exorcist*," adding: "That is, if you agree..." He was asking *me* if *I* agreed! Finally, it was no longer me alone doing the asking—I was being asked! I nearly had to hide the tears that came to my eyes.

MOY: **The film's *mise-en-scène* or direction was to be by Clifford Brown according to your contract for *Lorna*…. At the time of signing, were you aware of the man behind that pseudonym which he used several times?**

PS: What made matters a bit more confusing is how M. de Nesle himself would use the same alias as his own co-author credit for the film's music alongside composer André Bénichou![22] But, yes, Robert did reveal Franco's identity when I accepted the role.[23] He continued: "Your costar Guy Delorme is famous for playing in two cloak-and-dagger's with Jean Marais.[24] You will be directed by Jess Franco, a Spanish filmmaker who has already made many movies." I could already feel the heat of sunlight on my skin. There was no need for an elevator after signing the contract—I floated down the stairs![25]

Both Gérard and his father Léon Kikoïne sound edited for De Nesle's company Le Comptoir Français de Productions Cinématographiques (aka Comptoir Français du Film Production or CFFP) who produced many Franco films. "Kiko and the Count," interview by Lucas Balbo and Merrill Aldighieri, *Lorna…The Exorcist* (1974) [Blue-ray], Kino Lorber, 2023.

[22] André Benichou (1933-1914) and Clifford Brown (alias for Robert de Nesle, the film's producer) are credited for the music. A composer and classical guitarist, Bénichou's work is featured additionally in such Franco films as: *Exorcismes et Messes noires* (1975), *Les Grandes Emmerdeuses* (1975), and *Al otro lado del espejo* (1976) among others.

[23] In the 2017 interview by Balbo and Aldighieri, Stanford specifies how although Franco may be "canonized" by filmgoers now, he was viewed as "a devil" in the 1970s—this confirming Monica Swinn's similar observation in her interview. "Meet Pamela Stanford," interview by Lucas Balbo and Merrill Aldighieri, *Lorna…The Exorcist* (1974) [Blue-ray], Kino Lorber, 2023.

[24] While Guy Delorme (1929-2005) and screen icon Jean Marais (1913-1998) appeared together in multiple productions, perhaps the films referred to given the context are *Les mystères de Paris* (1962) and *Fantomas vs. Scotland Yard* (1967), both by French genre director André Hunebelle (1896-1985) who was also a renowned master glassmaker.

[25] Dated March 23, 1974, Stanford's contract to appear in *Lorna…* was apparently agreed to shortly before the start of the production since according to Stephen Thrower's *Murderous Passions: The Delirious Cinema of Jesús Franco* (Volume 1: 1959-1974) shooting began in April of that year.

MOY: **You had made several uncredited appearances prior to and including in 1974. According to your filmography, your first named character, Martine, appears in Franco's *Célestine…bonne à tout faire*[26] and your second that of the eponymously titled *Lorna…* made consecutively.**

PS: That's correct. Of the two, I consider *Lorna…* to be my first important role…an open door through which I truly entered the cinema. A dream…

MOY: **Were you provided with any form of script prior to or during the production?**

PS: I was given a script before the start of *Lorna*. But sometimes Jess did some improvisational scenes that may have found themselves into other films…[27]

MOY: **Anything you would like to share about the shooting locations?**

PS: We had just finished *Célestine…* before moving on to start shooting *Lorna…* at La Grande-Motte[28] in the South of France. Already steeped in the film's scenario, I discovered this equally strange town with futuristic architecture making it resemble an extraterrestrial city. In this unreal climate, I immediately melted into the role of Lorna—a cosmic Lilith in complete harmony with the spooky context of the place—only intensified by the enigmatic presence of my costar Guy Delorme. An impenetrable current both icy and fascinating emanated from him.

MOY: ***Lorna…* contains many outdoor scenes, as well as others shot in public locations at that then recently developed area.**

PS: Yes. Filming took place on the streets of La Grande-Motte, as well as in the casino and hotel rooms there.

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[26] Cast members shared in both *Célestine…* and *Lorna…* include Lina Romay (1954-2012), Bigotini [Richard de Coninck], Ramón Ardid, and Catherine Laferrière, as well as Jess Franco himself. Similarly, both films were produced Robert de Nesle (1906-1978); with screenplays by Franco and his first spouse Nicole (Guettard) Franco (d. 1996), additionally with Robert de Nesle for *Célestine…*); shot by Etienne Rosenfeld; and edited by Gérard Kikoïne (b. 1946). Bigotini's son Patrick Deconinck is credited as assistant editor of *Parties fines* (1977) directed by Kikoïne the cast for which includes Bigotini and Brigitte Lahaie (b. 1955)—the latter who appears in Franco's 1988 film *Faceless* (aka *Les Predateurs de la Nuit*).

[27] In the 2017 interview by Balbo and Aldighieri, Stanford indicates how she did not refer to a printed script during the film's shooting. "Meet Pamela Stanford," interview by Lucas Balbo and Merrill Aldighieri, *Lorna…The Exorcist* (1974) [Blue-ray], Kino Lorber, 2023.

[28] Constructed between 1960 and the mid-1970s, the seaside commune of La Grande-Motte was designed by Turkish-born French architect Jean Balladur (1924-2022) based on pre-Columbian pyramids such as Teotihuacan, Mexico; and influence by the seminal work of Brazilian leading modernist architect Oscar Niemeyer (1907-1912).

MOY: **Can you describe Jess' directorial style with actors?**

PS: He was extremely perceptive in working with each of us. His method of guiding an actor through a performance was suitable for everyone—always clear and easy. As a result, a single take for any given scene was typically sufficient.

MOY: **Can you share any specific memories associated with Lina Romay?**

PS: I must admit that my memories of her are minimal. Perhaps why is because she didn't speak much French or English. Although not speaking for her, I do share the share impression as to how Lina was more comfortable nude in front of the camera than most other actors do clothed. Jess made this possible by a natural ability of placing his actors at ease. He did this by creating a relaxed atmosphere on the set. This was true to such an extent that sometimes while shooting fairly explicit scenes, I felt like I was on a family holiday!

MOY: **Any other reminiscences of your costars—even with Jacqueline Laurent and Ramón Ardid with whom you did not share screen time?**[29]

PS: Although a bit warmer with the others, Jacqueline—who played Lina's mother in the film—was extremely cold towards me. As is well known, Ramón had a personal connection with Lina prior to her first meeting with Jess several years before this film. He seemed to be a good, but not especially happy man. Perhaps this was because of continued feelings towards Lina which may have been overshadowed by Jess's tremendous appreciation of her. As for Howard Vernon[30], he was an extraordinary person! Elegant, intelligent, and kind with everyone. We immediately shared a bond at first sight. The two of us talked a lot together during the shoot, remaining friends for a long time afterwards.

[29] Jacqueline Laurent (b. 1941) French-Canadian film and television actress. Ramón Ardid (?-?; aka Raymond Hardy) appeared multiple times in Franco films and served as an active member of his production crew, especially that of still photographer.

[30] German-born Swiss actor Howard Vernon (1908-1996) is credited as still photographer on *Lorna…* under his birth name Mario Lippert. He appears frequently throughout Franco's filmography following work in films made by such renowned directors as Réne Clément, Sacha Guitry, Jean-Pierre Melville, Powell and Pressburger, and Julien Duvivier; and then concurrently while also performing in those by Fritz Lang, Roger Vadim, John Frankenheimer, Jean-Luc Godard, Terence Young, and Woody Allen. In addition to still photographer on many Franco films, Vernon also provided largely uncredited French voice dubbing for productions by other directors.

MOY: **Famed Spanish fashion designer Paco Rabanne is credited for your unforgettable gowns. By this time, his modernistic creations had been popularized by such stylish icons as Brigitte Bardot and Jane Birkin, and widely seen in such films as *Casino Royale* (1966) and as worn by Audrey Hepburn in *Two for the Road* (1967).**

PS: Rabanne was not involved directly—I never met him. My gown fitting took place in a shop in Paris.[31] I was dazzled by the beauty of the dresses. I wanted them all! Certainly, he was not only an exceptional artist, but also a clairvoyant who predicted the end of the world in 1999. According to this claim, the only place to survive would have been the city of Annecy and the surrounding area where he relocated in a town nearby. By chance, I happen to be there, too—not because of his prediction, but because I had already planned a holiday there. As fate would have it, we were in the same village! A waitress of a café informed me how he often had his morning coffee there. Unfortunately, I never met him. Too bad! And the world did not end as foretold.

MOY: **Your makeup design as Lorna has become iconic.**

PS: My makeup? *Oh no!* A bad memory! The production had hired a non-professional makeup artist.[32] As I recall it, she just did anything that came to her mind. I was not especially pleased. And then she departed earlier than anticipated. Afterwards, a very beautiful dress leant to me by a friend disappeared. Coincidence? Make of that what you will. I was so embarrassed, I just paid my friend the price of the dress.

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[31] This may have been first store of the Spanish-French designer Paco Rabanne (1934-2023; Francisco Rabaneda Cuervo) located on the Rue du Cherche-Midi which had opened on Paris' Left Bank in 1972. If so, the selections to be worn by Stanford were more than likely made from the designer's *prêt-à-porter* creations as *haute couture* was not typically available at this location.

[32] In the 2017 interview by Balbo and Aldighieri, Stanford does not recall the name of the makeup artist. The film's credited makeup artist is Catherine Demesmaeker (?-?), active in international film from approximately 1974 to 1991. Around the time of the making of *Lorna…*, she served as assistant makeup artist on *Stavisky* (1974) directed by Alain Resnais featuring Jean-Paul Belmondo, Charles Boyer, Michael Lonsdale, and Gérard Depardieu. Other notable films include: *Madame Bovary* (1991) directed by Claude Chabrol starring Isabelle Huppert, and *Night on Earth* (1991) directed by Jim Jarmusch with Winona Ryder, Gena Rowlands, and Béatrice Dalle. There are strong similarities between the exaggerated eye makeup design used for the title character of *Lorna…* and that created by Van Smith for Divine in John Water's cult classic *Pink Flamingos* (1972). Although the latter film was not given a commercial U.S. domestic release until 1974, it is tantalizing to hypothesize how perhaps images of Divine from it may have appeared in European media at the time resulting in a possible influence on Lorna's flamboyant "look". "Meet Pamela Stanford," interview by Lucas Balbo and Merrill Aldighieri, *Lorna…The Exorcist* (1974) [Blue-ray], Kino Lorber, 2023.

MOY: **Can you specify if any of your films with Jess were released in which your own voice is used?**

PS: Actually, I cannot answer that since I have not seen all of the films I made with Jess. But having seen it, I do know that Lorna's voice in the film is not my own. While I had agreed to dubbing my own voice, this did not happen for whatever reasons.[33] Perhaps I should have been more narcissistic about making that happen—especially since I have always enjoyed altering my voice for a particular performance.

MOY: **Historically, we have at last arrived at a time when Franco's artful, thought-provoking, and often beautiful presentation of eroticism is finally being recognized as something so much more than simple-minded sleaze. Might you have any comments on the erotic scenes shot for *Lorna*…?**

PS: Jess had achieved quite a feat in presenting Guy Delorme, a performer popular with moviegoers at the time, nude in bed with an actor! Jess was capable of creating erotic images of burning intensity. His camera literally took possession of the bodies on view, roaming up, down, and everywhere—a sensual vision accentuated by impactful zooms. Gentlemen of the audience steeped in bourgeois morality must have been in ecstasy beholding a girl's generous rump! I recall pointing out to Jess how the actor in question also possessed a beautiful face…his answer: "I wasn't looking in that direction." O, Jess… Such a true aesthete. He filmed deliciously naked bodies with the same pleasure as he savored good food!

MOY: **Are there any especially memorable moments you have associated with Franco during the shooting of this film?**

PS: Well then, more on food! During lunch breaks, Jess would describe gourmet dishes enjoyed on his many travels—and he did so in excellent French, sometimes seasoned with such phrases as *poissons merveilleux* (wonderful fishes). His own poetic sauce! As many know, Jess was also a talented pianist. At a café one night, he rewarded us all by playing a magnificent jazz piece, much appreciated and applauded by his actors as well as the other customers.

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[33] In the 2010 interview by Balbo and Aldighieri, Gérard Kikoïne (b. 1946) explains how his sound work for De Nesle's company expanded to multiple duties, including music editing and dubbing. The overall freedom he was given for the latter responsibilities by De Nesle required him to make narrative sense of several Franco productions with the assistance of a screenplay adaptor since the film prints provided were silent, typically already in a spliced edit, and only accompanied by a minimal script. "Kiko and the Count," interview by Lucas Balbo and Merrill Aldighieri, *Lorna…The Exorcist* (1974) [Blue-ray], Kino Lorber, 2023.

MOY: **Can you share any thoughts on seeing *Lorna…* as a finished film—as well as any of its alternate versions?**

PS: I feel that not only this film, but its story and characters genuinely exist in another dimension. For me, the "soft" version is not nearly as powerful. And I should note how much I adore the fairy tale melody used on the soundtrack which adds that much more fantasy to *Lorna…*[34]

MOY: **Do you feel the experience of making this particular film connect you with Jess Franco in some special way?**

PS: I was very much aware of little commented upon yet important facets of his personality. Jess' sharpness of mind was able to convey to the spectator animal and terrestrial values—symbols aligned with his astrological sign of Taurus. I am a Scorpio, marked by animality and mysticism. So Jess and I were ideal partners for *Lorna….* On the other hand, things exist when they are seen and according to each person's perception. Although unfamiliar with my deeply mystical soul, yet possessing a mediumistic instinct of his own, Jess perceived me perfectly in the role of the unsettling Lorna.

MOY: **Let's discuss *Das Frauenhaus*. Do you favor this title or its perhaps more commonly known alternate one *Blue Rita*?**

PS: I do prefer *Blue Rita*. In my mind, colors are associated with music, joy, parties, and good times—while *Das Frauenhaus* evokes visions of a whore house associated with discipline and cruel pimps.

MOY: **Do you recall how you became involved in this specific production?**

PS: Producer Robert de Nesle wanted me in the film.[35]

MOY: **Were you provided with any form of script prior and/or during the shoot?**

PS: Jess had his own script for guidance. It seemed to me the film existed in his head from where he would watch it from an imaginary screen and then instruct the actors what to do accordingly.

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[34] Franco authority Tim Lucas has stated in reference to *Lorna…*: "There's no shortage of pretenders, but it's the only real fairy tale for adults." Lucas, *Succubus (Necronomicon)*, 226.

[35] While Swiss film director and producer Erwin C. Dietrich (1930-2018) officially produced *Das Frauenhaus*/*Blue Rita* (1977) for his company Elite Film, Robert de Nesle is its uncredited French co-producer.

MOY: **Do you have any comments on the character of Gina?**

PS: I recall feeling then—and still do today—that this character primarily furnishes the film with its peculiar atmosphere.

MOY: **How did you relate with costar Eric Falk?**

PS: Eric Falk[36] was not especially talkative except when speaking in German. I might describe my contact with him as being similar to that of a soldier during wartime.

MOY: **The shooting locations and set are outstanding. Geographically speaking, where were your scenes shot?**

PS: In Zurich. So much massive, square architecture! After arriving the night before, we were driven to the shooting location. The place looked like a Hollywood studio! The austere ambiance was utterly different from the Spanish, Portuguese, and French locations we were more familiar with. In fact, we communicated in English with the production team.

MOY: **Did the highly unusual sets influence your performance as well as the overall feel of the shoot?**

PS: Perhaps due to the bizarre ambiance on the set, there were certainly outbursts of laughter by us actors for no particular reason! On occasion, we felt like automatons submerged in some color splashed alternate dimension. Jess was especially focused on the visual setting of this film—his art surrounding us surely possessed us all. I will never forget Martine Fléty's indigo wig…or Olivier Mathot's nude body covered in spinach-green paint! When we finished shooting for the day, a taxi ordered by Robert de Nesle was arranged to transport the actors to our hotel. On one particular night, I remember De Nesle urging poor paint-covered Olivier to wait to take his shower back at the hotel since the taxi's meter was running. A bitter exchange ensued between the two of them—with Olivier stark naked, trying to hide his private parts with his hands, and De Nesle nearing apoplexy! Olivier yelled desperately: "Don't you see I am naked?!" De Nesle's reply: "We only have to wrap you in a blanket!" In the end, the taxi left without our nude costar onboard.

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[36] According to a 2014 Online post from home media label Cinemadrome, just prior to Eric Falk's work in film, the Swiss actor had been a Judo champion who had competed at the Olympic Games Munich in summer 1972, losing to Heavyweight Gold medalist winner Wilem (Wim) Ruska representing the Netherlands. While no discredit is intended in any way, corroboration of this claim has yet to be obtained from the Schweizerischer Judo & Ju-Jitsu Verband (https://www.tapatalk.com/groups/cinemadrome/eric-falk-t1490.html, February 28, 2014, post #8). Between 2014-15, Falk was featured in a series of video documentary shorts for Cinemadrome releases of his work, including Franco's *Das Frauenhaus*/*Blue Rita* (1977) and *Frauengefängnis*/*Barbed Wire Dolls* (1975). During a decade-long career, Falk appeared in nearly thirty films, the majority of which were productions by Franco-collaborator Erwin C. Dietrich. In addition to these two productions, Franco directed Falk in: *Downtown* (1975); *Rolls Royce Baby* (1975); *Die Sklavinnen* (1976); *Ilsa, the Wicked Warden* (1977); and *Die teuflischen Schwestern*/*Sexy Sisters* (1977), also with Pamela Stanford.

Yet, when we saw Olivier the next morning, it was as if nothing had ever happened at all. *C'est la vie* on a Jess Franco film!

MOY: **Do you feel this particular work successfully manifests Franco's main obsessions?**

PS: Without question. It expresses two significant aspects of life which fascinated Jess endlessly—the nature of sex and the ethereal spirit.

MOY: **Have you seen the completed film?**

PS: Believe it or not, I have never seen it! Time has transformed the atmosphere of the shoot into a lingering, surrealist feeling, rather than any clearly-defined memory. *Blue Rita* brings back to me moving memories and nostalgia. Its soundtrack reminds me of music I once heard in an American movie when I was very little…which made me fantasize of becoming an actor. For me, the making of this film evokes visions of foggy blue and ocean green…those large windows behind which we performed made me feel as I was within an aquarium…this strange spell only broken by the spontaneous laughter of the other actors awakening me from a dream.

Pamela Stanford, Cimetière de Montmartre, January 1976 (Paris); photographed and reproduced with permission by Alexandre H. Mathis.

Pamela Stanford, recent (Pamela Stanford Collection)

Monica Swinn, recent (Monika Swuine Collection)

Pamela and Monica: A Transitional Coda

Michael Orlando Yaccarino: **Have you ever worked with actor Monica Swinn?**

Pamela Stanford: While not sharing much if any screen time together, Monica and I were both directed by Jess in *Les Chatouilleuses* (1974), filmed in a *very* Catholic Cascais Portugal at the time.[37] A little anecdote! Jess prevented a possible scandal during the shoot by stopping a few of us actors from drinking at a local bar…while still dressed as nuns for our roles! I do recall having the impression that Monica got along well with Franco and enjoyed working with him. I also had the feeling she had a very European perspective, while my own was perhaps decidedly American maybe because I have family residing there.

[37] Pamela Stanford and Monica Swinn also appear in the following Franco film's: *Célestine… bonne à tout faire* (1974), *Les Chatouilleuses* (1974), *Le Jouisseur* (1974), and *Les Grandes Emmerdeuses* (1974); as well as *Razzia sur le plaisir* (1975-76) reputedly directed by Marius and Daniel Lesoeur, with uncredited assistance by Franco.

Monica Swinn

on

Das Bildnis der Doriana Gray (1975) aka ***Die Marquise von Sade***

Monica Swinn[38] was born Monika Swuine in Charleroi, Belgium. Early artistic endeavors included stage work and appearances in experimental film. The latter involved collaborations with noted Belgian filmmaker Roland Lethem and the American composer-singer-film director David McNeill, son of legendary Russian-French artist Marc Chagall.[39] This dual national has lived and worked in France since 1974. Swinn's often ephemeral, yet absolutely indelible impression remain upon such essential Jess Franco films as *La Comtesse perverse* (1973), *La Comtesse noire* (1973), *Exorcisme* (1974), *Shining Sex* (1975), *Frauengefängnis/Barbed Wire Dolls* (1975), and *Das Bildnis der Doriana Gray* (1975). Swinn can be seen as well in Jean Rollin's *Les démoniaques* (1974) and *Phantasmes* (1975), Pierre Chevalier's *Hommes de joie pour femmes vicieuses* (1974), and *Ces sacrées anglaises* (1977) by Richard Bigotini [Richard de Coninck].[40] Then unexpectedly, more than thirty years after what had been her most recent film credit from the early 1980s, Swinn appeared quietly and fittingly in the remarkable *The Duke of Burgundy* (2014) by British director Peter Strickland who has openly recognized admiration for Franco's work. Under her birthname, she is the author of *Les empoisonneurs: crimes et mystères*,[41] a non-fiction survey of infamous poisoners and their crimes, as well as how toxic substances are utilized in achieving romantic and monetary goals. After residing in Brussels and Paris for more than three decades, Swinn relocated to Normandy.

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[38] Although not a definitive list, Swinn appeared in the following Franco directed films: certain edits of *La Comtesse perverse* (1973), including the film's French theatrical re-release titled *Les Croqueuses* which contains footage of Swinn shot surreptitiously in Paris during the later making of *Exorcisme* (1974); *La Comtesse noire* (1973); *Les Nuits brûlantes de Linda* (1973-74); *Exorcisme* (1974); *Célestine… bonne à tout faire* (1974); *Les Chatouilleuses* (1974); *Le Jouisseur* (1974); *Les Grandes Emmerdeuses* (1974); *Midnight Party* (1975); among multiple sequences shot over several years cobbled together to form the film *Julietta 69*/*De Sade's Juliette* (1974-75), one contained in certain edits shows Swinn briefly sunbathing in a deckchair atop the roof of the Portuguese hotel where the production crew were staying; *Shining Sex* (1975); *Frauengefängnis/Barbed Wire Dolls* (1975); *Downtown* (1975); *Das Bildnis der Doriana Gray* (1975); *Camp d'amour pour mercenaires*/*Love Camp* (1977); *Frauen ohne Unschuld*/*Wicked Women* (1977); *Le sadique de Notre-Dame* (1979); as well as the occasionally listed, but uncorroborated *Ejaculation*(*s*) (1975) which most likely was unproduced, and *Razzia sur le plaisir* (1975-76) reputedly directed by Marius and Daniel Lesoeur, with uncredited assistance by Franco—Swinn notes how Franco would not even permit pseudonymous credit for his limited work on the production.

[39] Roland Letham (b. 1942). David McNeill (b. 1946). Marc Chagall (1887-1885).

[40] French directors Jean Rollin (1938-2010) and Pierre Chevalier (1915-2005)—the latter of whom directed the 1970 Eurociné production *La vie amoureuse de l'homme invisible* (aka *Orloff and the Invisible Man* among other multiple titles) starring Howard Vernon.

[41] Monika Swuine, *Les empoisonneurs: crimes et mysteres* (Pygmalion, 1980).

Michael Orlando Yaccarino: **Do you have a title preference between *Doriana Gray* or *Die Marquise von Sade* (1975)?**

Monica Swinn: I much prefer *Doriana Gray*. The thread that connects Franco's film to Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*[42] is tenuous, but it's a title that makes me dream more than this thunderous *Die Marquise von Sade*[43], which, I admit, seems to me to be very catchy. Especially since I don't see what Sade's name has to do with this story. Doriana doesn't kill to enjoy the suffering of her victims: she makes them die of pleasure! A pleasure that is supposed to preserve the youthfulness of her appearance, but that she herself is unable to feel in her flesh. As you know, in fact, it is her twin sister who "benefits", so to speak, since the unfortunate woman has gone crazy by dint of absorbing into her body the storms of orgasms that result from Doriana's always frustrating sexual activities.

MOY: **Heroine or villainess…?**

MS: For me, Doriana is certainly a monster (a very beautiful monster), but it seems to me unfair, unwelcome, to associate Sade's name with the kind of curse that befalls her. The poor woman is a victim of her nature, of an irrepressible need. What does Dracula do when he's hungry? Will he be called a sadist? Dracula does not belong to the world of reason. Neither does Doriana. She is a creature between dream and reality, on the edge of worlds...[44] A seductive, dangerous creature,

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[42] The original novella version of the work first appeared in the July 1890 issue of the American literary periodical *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* before Wilde revised and expanded it to novel length published a year later.

[43] According to Franco expert Robert Monell, *Doriana Gray*'s producer Edwin C. Dietrich required the addition of sexually graphic situations into the film to boost its profitability. Whether such material was actually filmed by Franco himself has not been definitively determined. There are slight but noticeable variations in an alternate version available via streaming services sometimes advertised as *Marquise De Sade*, such as by Amazon, at the time of this article's publication. Perhaps closer to the director's original intentions, this less explicit, dreamlike, and shorter version runs approx. 69-minutes as compared to the stronger cut at approx. 76-minutes. This shorter form incorporates several poetic moments not found in other releases. This includes one in which Doriana descends a metallic spiral staircase reverentially bearing a flower repeated hypnotically with slight variants. Another depicts her consuming the petals of a crimson bloom, this revealed as a metaphoric act when crosscut with a scene in which she delivers oral pleasure to the girlfriend (Martine Stedil) of her manservant Xiro (Ramón Ardid). A further oneiric situation shows Doriana smoking a hookah while lounging in a swinging hammock, and yet another in which she pleases herself before and against a window sprinkled with rain. Elevating the carnal intensity in some of these lesser-seen instances are shots of a drum being played by anonymous hands—arguably an instance of diegetic music or a metaphoric embellishment to further heighten the sensual mood. Contrasts in Romay's makeup design and hairstyle between the main body of the film and these lyrical scenes strongly suggest the film's shorter version as an amalgamation of footage shot at different times and locations. Indeed, the same spiral staircase noted here is utilized in *Das Frauenhaus* (*Blue Rita*) shot approximately two years later in which Romay does not appear.

[44] Consistent with the character's non-human dimensions, Doriana may submit to a watery demise in the villa's *Balaneion* or bathroom. In ancient Greece, these spaces were often dedicated to the naiads. Associated with water, such female nature entities were sometimes worshiped through ritualistic bathing. It is curious to note how

of a more or less fantastic nature, who regularly returns in various avatars in the obsessive and expansive universe of filmmaker Jésus Franco...

MOY: **Speaking of world edges, the film's remarkable palatial setting certainly suggests within the narrative's context a mysteriously sensual bardo.**

MS: The interiors were shot at the Villa Kérylos[45]—the "Greek villa" as it is called in Beaulieu-sur-mer... A magical place—a "*bijou de l'Art nouveau*"—the ideal setting for this cruel tale that could have been born from a pen dipped in black eroticism of certain writers more or less contemporary with Oscar Wilde. We could mention many—for France, it is the name of Jean Lorrain[46] that comes to me at the top of the list. As for Wilde, who died in 1900, I'm sure he would have loved this place if he had lived long enough to know it...

MOY: **Do you recall how you became involved in this specific production?**

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mythologically, these and similar deities while remarkably long-lived in human terms were not imbued with immortality. Considering the timeless universe Franco crafted for the film, it is enticing to speculate a preternatural duration to the twin sisters' isolated existences prior to the start of the action.

[45] Overlooking the Baie des Fourmis in Beaulieu-sur-Mer on the Côte d'Azur, the Villa Kérylos was built between 1902-1908 by French architect Emmanuel Pontremoli (1865-1956) as a secondary home for Théodore Reinach (1860-1928), the multitalented Frenchmen who found success as an archaeologist, lawyer, politician, and musicologist, as well as in other areas. The overall design and all décor elements of this leisure villa were meticulously based upon 2nd-century BC noble residences on the island of Delos (Greece). Open to visitors since 1966, it remains virtually unchanged for well over a century. So one wonders when seeing Lina Romay in the film reclining upon what appears to be a carefully reproduced table *à la Grecque* whether the required clearances were obtained prior to shooting. Such direct interaction with the historical furnishings during filming there is somewhat contrary to the prohibition Swinn reports in her interview. The Greek word *kerylos* is associated with the avian genus name *Halcyon*—a type of tree kingfisher described in a simplified version of ancient legend as a bird which lays its eggs near or upon the sea made calm by divine intervention. Thus its signification as a fortuitous omen. Curiously, the natural background sounds featured in the audio for *Doriana Gray* prominently feature the calls of various birdlife. While not uncommon in a Franco film, these sound effects—and the title character's penchant for observing the sometimes turbulent waters nearby her sanctuary—are imbued with additional resonance given these associations. "La Villa Kérylos, une villa grecque à l'antique," Villa Kérylos: Centre des monuments nationaux, accessed February 14, 2024, https://www.villakerylos.fr/decouvrir/la-villa-kerylos-une-villa grecque-a-l-antique. It has been noted erroneously elsewhere how this same location was reused in Franco's 1983 film *Mil sexos tiene la noche*/*Night Has a Thousand Desires* as the exotic home for the character of Lorna (Carmen Carrión). Instead, the latter film utilizes the Castillo El Bil-Bil located in the Andalusian town of Benalmádena in southern Spain. It was designed by Spanish architect Enrique Atencia Molina in the neo-*Mudéjar* aesthetic inspired by Spanish medieval design when he was commissioned by the Spanish-French Hermann family in 1930 popular at the time. Since the 1990s, it has served as a stunning space for cultural events and weddings.

[46] A direct contemporary of Wilde, the openly gay, ether imbibing, *fin-de-siècle* French author and journalist Jean Lorrain (1855-1906) wrote Decadent novels, short stories, poetry, criticism, and stage works, some of which contain definite horror and fantastical elements.

MS: I believe it was at the beginning of the 1960s that Pierre Quérut and his father, an elderly lawyer, had created the company General Films in Brussels. Initially, it was a film distribution house. But then sometime later, they started making low-cost productions. This is how they joined forces with Eurociné—Marius Lesœur's Parisian company—which produced Franco's work, among others.[47] I was living in Brussels at the time, and it was through Pierre Quérut that I met Jess…and that's how I took my first steps with Franco towards appearing in *La comtesse noire* (1973) or *Female Vampire*, as you may know it. On a small piece of land behind their house in the heart of Brussels, the Quéruts had built a sort of hangar for the cinema. It was in this place pompously named their "studio" that some scenes for *La comtesse noire* were filmed. And it was in this same place that my friend Jean Rollin came to shoot the tavern scenes for his film *Les Démoniaques* (1974) a few months later, if I remember correctly. My companion and I had recruited a few friends to improvise a little entertainment for these tavern scenes. Just to clarify, Jean's film has nothing to do with either Franco's *Les Démons* (1973), nor with Jess himself. And as for Pierre Quérut, I never had the opportunity to meet him again—nor did he have anything to do with the films I then made with Franco. When Jess intended to hire me, he called me himself *before* informing Eurociné; Robert de Nesle; or later, Erwin C. Dietrich. *Voilà!* In late summer of 1975, Jess had brought me to Beaulieu-sur-mer to apparently play the abominable director of a women's prison, a sadistic hell of lawlessness located in an unidentified dictatorship in South America.

MOY: ***Frauengefängnis…Barbed Wire Dolls* (1975).**

MS: That's correct. The film was originally intended for Eurociné.

MOY: **According to Stephen Thrower's essential two-part study of Franco's work[48], there was no producer associated with *Doriana Gray* prior to and even during the shoot—and furthermore, that the production took place "spontaneously".**

MS: As soon as I arrived, Jess explained to me that he was actually going to make three films—the women's prison story; as well as a *comédie policière*, which would become *Downtown* (1975) for the German producer Erwin C. Dietrich with whom I believe he had an agreement; and finally, a "more personal film" he was *very* keen on—one with very few characters, including my own—

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[47] According to Julian Grainger's essay "Eurociné: The Business of Euro-Bis" included in Stephen Thrower's *Murderous Passions: The Delirious Cinema of Jesús Franco* (Volume 1: 1959-1974), Belgian lawyer Jean Quérut and his son Pierre founded Brux Inter (Brux International) Film (Pictures) of Brussels co-produced films with Eurociné. In an onscreen interview for the multipart bonus feature series *In the Land of Franco*, Swinn briefly discusses the connection between Pierre Quérut and General Films (Brussels) with the 1975 trio of Franco productions consisting of *Frauengefängnis/Barbed Wire Dolls*, *Downtown*, and *Doriana Gray* (1975). *In the Land of Franco*: Part 7, directed by David Gregory, *Sex is Crazy* (1981) [Blue-ray], Severin Films, 2022. While Pierre Quérut appears in a minor role opposite Jess Franco in the latter's *La Comtesse noire*/*Female Vampire* (1973), he does not share screen time with Swinn in the same film.

[48] See: Select Bibliography. Volume 1 contains a foreword by Monica Swinn.

but *shhh*, it shouldn't be mentioned on the other two shoots. Of course, this would be the film that would become *Doriana Gray*.

MOY: **Can you share any information on how this impulse film "happened"?**

MS: I don't know anything more than what we both read in Stephen Thrower's indispensable work. As I had already understood that Jess' productions were sometimes acrobatics without a net, I preferred not to know the details at the time. And I must admit without the slightest shame that the announcement of an additional film to shoot with Jess made me happy! A more or less clandestine film, moreover... I was absolutely thrilled! As for the "spontaneous" nature of the shoot...this is a point that puzzles me a little. It all depends on what is meant by "spontaneously". The more I think about it, the more I believe the idea of making three films instead of two must have germinated as a result of Jess scouting the region for locations not very long before shooting.

MOY: **The "found" locations are indeed superb.**

MS: Between the disturbing decrepitude of the Château Robert[49] in Vallauris, near Cannes, and the timeless beauty of the luminous Villa Kérylos,[50] something…*something* had to happen in Jess and the cameraman that he was to begin a dream... The story of two sisters…twins—the double face of the same tormented soul... That's just a hypothesis, of course. "Spontaneously"—an idea that imposes itself when you have all the elements at hand to make it happen...where's the harm?

MOY: **Do you have any special memories about shooting at the Villa Kérylos during August 1975?**

MS: I especially remember the villa itself. At the time, it was not yet the museum it would become. Special permission was required to visit it. I don't know how and under what conditions Jess obtained permission to film there. I also remember how we were forbidden to move objects, nor did we have time to dwell on them.

MOY: **So this was an especially quick shoot, even for Franco?**

MS: This may surprise you, but all the scenes I'm in were shot in one day.

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[49] Located at Vallauris on the French Rivera, the Moorish-style Château Robert (also known as the Villa Gazan) was constructed in the 1860s by the seaside commune's mayor Ferdinand Dervieu and includes an extensive botanical park. It is the property of the town hall of Vallauris-Golfe-Juan who have restored the site after years of multiple ownership and abandonment.

[50] See: footnote no. 30. The entrance hall floor mosaic inscription *XAIPE* (ancient Greek for "Rejoice!" or "Enjoy yourself!") can be seen when the American journalist (Monica Swinn) enters the villa for the first time. This implications of this simple welcome greeting will darken ironically as the film explores extreme indulgence in and frustration of erotic desire.

MOY: **Incredible! Were you provided with any form of script prior or even during the shoot?**

MS: No, nothing at all. For *Doriana Gray*, we didn't have a script or *guión*, as we say in Spanish. With Jess, this was often the case. A real shot-by-shot script with dialogue and detail was a luxury I rarely experienced on his films. He himself had a plan, a synopsis, but, more often than not, he was careful not to say too much to the actors. Jess revealed the scenes to be played as we went along, with dialogue sometimes scribbled on scraps of paper... In this way, I believe, Jess gave himself a sort of permanent right to improvisation.

MOY: **Was there any level of satire intended in the role of the Feminist journalist as conceived or as you performed it?**

MS: The existence of any such satire was implicit in the situation, but I don't recall Jess giving me any indication of that. What interested my character was the power of erotic fascination that emanated from Lina's Doriana—a power that I could only succumb to.[51] Anyway, Jess wasn't giving much direction. He described the situation, the movements. Then, he preferred to let the actors play their own game. If he was happy, we'd move on to the next take. We actors understood that requesting multiple takes was not the style of the house. Second takes were rare.

[51] A significant instance of diegetic music occurs when Doriana (Romay) is playing piano during which the journalist (Swinn) expresses straightforward amatory interest in her mysterious hostess. Curiously, a very similar scene initiates the sapphic lovemaking sequence between Catherine Deneuve and Susan Sarandon in the erotic vampire film *The Hunger* (1983) by British director Tony Scott (1944-2012). For this analysis, American musicologist, composer, and pianist John LaMar Cole identified the music composition performed by Doriana as from *Kinderszenen*, op. 15 by Robert Schumann (1810-1856). Written by the German composer for solo piano in 1838, this Early Romantic work is comprised of thirteen individually titled *Scenes from Childhood*. More specifically, the piece made heard is the eleventh of the set named "*Fürchtenmachen*" ("Frightening") in E Minor–G Major. What is notable here is how the version utilized is a transcription of the piece for piano and flute. Thus although Doriana is playing alone, the accompanying flute part is heard as well—this duet evoking the presence of her twin sister confined to a private sanitorium. The childhood themes of Schumann's *Kinderszenen* further implies the early genesis of the perpetual link between the two. Most probably, the recording is one among several examples of library music sourced for the soundtrack. Swiss film composer Walter Baumgartner (1904-1997) receives music credit for *Doriana Gray*. Given the perfectly apt inclusion of the Schumann, it is uncertain how much deliberateness was exerted in the musical choices for the production. Baumgartner worked frequently for Erwin C. Dietrich, who produced *Doriana Gray* and co-produced *Das Frauenhaus* as noted earlier here. Baumgartner is also credited for the following Franco films mostly all produced by Dietrch: *Frauengefängnis/Barbed Wire Dolls* (1975), *Greta: Haus Ohne Männer*/*Ilsa, the Wicked Warden* (1976), *Die Liebesbriefe einer portugesischen Nonne*/*Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun* (1976), and *Frauen für Zellenblock 9*/*Women in Cellblock 9* (1977). It is interesting to compare how *Doriana Gray*'s "spider and fly" power dynamic between the titular character (Romay) and the unwitting journalist (Swinn) is reversed in a key sequence with the same actors from Franco's *Shining Sex*/*La fille aux sexe brilliant* (1975) involving the formidable mystic Madame Pécame/Pican (Swinn) and stripper Cynthia (Romay), a captive of possibly intergalactic beings.

MOY: **Can you share any specific memories associated with Lina Romay?**

MS: Lina was Lina, we were friends. I don't have anything special to say about her, except that she was a great girl. The news of her death devastated me. To paraphrase the Comtesse de Noailles, she was not meant to be dead.[52] For me, she never will be...

MOY: **Although you do not share scenes with him in this film, do you have any memories connected with costar Ramón Ardid?**

MS: As for Ramón, whom I met at the same time as Jess and Lina in Brussels at the end of 1973, I liked him, too. He also worked as Jess' assistant. He knew how to do everything on a movie set…everything, besides acting! In *Doriana Gray*, he found himself in front of or behind the camera depending on what Jess asked of him.[53] It was at Beaulieu-sur-Mer that I saw Ramón for the last time. I don't know what happened to him and hope he's still alive and doing well.

MOY: **And as for actor Peggy Markoff?**

MS: It seems her film career was limited to the few films she made with Franco at this same time or shortly after the shoots on the French Riviera. I remember running into her in Switzerland on two Erwin C. Dietrich productions—*Love Camp* (1977) and *Wicked Women* (1978)[54]—but I never had the slightest exchange with her. In fact, I don't think she ever noticed my existence! She, on the other hand, was hard to ignore. Peggy was a colorful character, extremely extroverted—not to say exhibitionist—who put on a show all the time. With a crazy look and lightning ability at retort, she possessed a style both scoundrelous and flamboyant that made the transvestite cabaret revue scenes such a success. That was, I think, her professional environment...

MOY: **Are there any singular moments you have associated with Jess during the shooting of this film?**

MS: *Non, cher Michel!* I wish I remembered... but no. You met him, do you know what he was like?

MOY: **True. Both Jess and Lina for just a few moments at a film convention many years ago. They were both extremely polite and friendly.**

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[52] Anna de Noailles (1876-1933) extract from the French writer's poetry collection *Les Eblouissements* (1907): "*Hélas, je n'étais pas faite pour être morte.*" ("Alas, I was not meant to be dead.")

[53] Ramón Ardid served as still photographer on the film.

[54] Both directed by Jess Franco, the original titles for these films respectively are *Frauen im Liebeslager* (1977) and *Frauen ohne Unschuld* (1978).

MS: Well, Jess was absolutely the same man when we were filming—that is, the antithesis of the temperamental or sadistic director who confuses the art of directing an actor with that of torture. I rarely saw him become angry or even upset at work... He rarely lost his temper... Except with actors who were always asking him for psychological cues, in which case he could throw a Homeric tantrum. *Psychological pointers! And what else?* Jess was used to working quickly with people who didn't mind. It was obvious that psychological indications were not one of his priorities as a director: It was better to know that...

MOY: **Franco himself served as cameraman for this film. Performing for him so many times, did the shooting experience with Franco differ when he himself was behind the camera as opposed to when a cameraman was on set?**

MS: For me, it didn't change much... On a movie set or elsewhere, Jess was likely to take the camera at any time... He would establish such an understanding with the cinematographer provided by the production. I remember, for example, that Erwin C. Dietrich actually forbade Jess from taking the camera! As you can imagine, Jess paid special attention to the erotic scenes. Installed behind the camera, he became one with it. The atmosphere was charged with a kind of electricity, becoming denser. Little by little, in great silence, he directed the action in a muffled voice—brief, rare, precise indications. He thus improvised, like the jazzman that he was, an extended solo of images. *These* were the moments when he gave the best of himself.

MOY: **Do you have any thoughts on this particular film in relation to your career?**

MS: *Ma carrière!* Let's be serious... What you call my career is mainly due to my presence in a few Franco films... After him, the flood! In the beautiful world of traditional bourgeois French cinema towards the end of the 1970s, while not completely unknown, I realized that the name of Jesús Franco was arousing only sarcasm or contempt. And all this by people who, for the most part, had never watched a single one of his films in their lives! So for them, I was viewed as just an "erotic actor"… That wasn't how I saw myself. In fact, I didn't have the slightest desire to be stuck in any category! So I didn't insist.

MOY: **How would you place Dorianna Gray in Franco's overall filmography?**

MS: I think the film is in the middle of a pivotal period which begins shortly after Jess' meeting with Lina Romay…when she emerges as the *comtesse noire* from the mist...Let us end with this image…My memories—which date back half a century!—blur, mix, and become more and more like very exquisite images, bordering on abstraction…erotic scenes such as Franco loved to film at that time.

MOY: **And how do you see yourself in those extraordinary images from this particular film?**

MS: While I am aware of being in some of them, my memory has retained nothing of these moments. I really liked *Doriana Gray* when I saw it at the time—or more precisely, a few years later. But it's like a strange and pleasant dream of which I have lost all the images. When I had the chance, a long time ago, to meet Jesús Franco, I had seen some of his films and I really liked them...I loved working with him and if I had to do it again, assuming we could rewind time, I would do so without hesitation. It was this joyful, optimistic time when we thought we could live without hindrance while advocating love instead of war. Not so simple, of course, to remake the world, but beyond this easy caricature, everything was still possible...

MOY: **And your current opinion of Franco's work?**

MS: Today?... I still admire Jesús Franco's films, but I have lost the desire to talk about them... Their legacy continues well and so do I. Which is a rather good sign...

MOY: **Can you describe your current life?**

MS: I live in a small, remote Northwestern village of France which is nestled in wonderful natural parkland with my husband, my cats, my books, my camera, my easel, and my memories. And while I do use a computer, my memories are subject to power outages…as they become less and less precise, alas, I must admit.

MOY: **Any final thoughts on *Doriana Gray*?**

MS: For me, it's experimental cinema, we could even classify it in the Art house category! *What else..?* It was a pleasure acting with Lina in the marvelous Villa Kérylos. The place is magic! I returned there to shoot a DVD bonus not very long ago.[55] Almost fifty years after the film was made, the house was still the same as it was when I was there with Jess, Lina, and the camera. I felt their presence with me…it was a great emotion...If ever you go to Beaulieu-sur- mer on the Côte d'Azur, you must visit that villa. *Who knows?* Perhaps you'll find me there, with Jess and Lina…*floating invisible around you*...

[55] *In the Land of Franco*: Part 7, *Sex is Crazy* (1981) [Blue-ray], Severin Films, 2022.

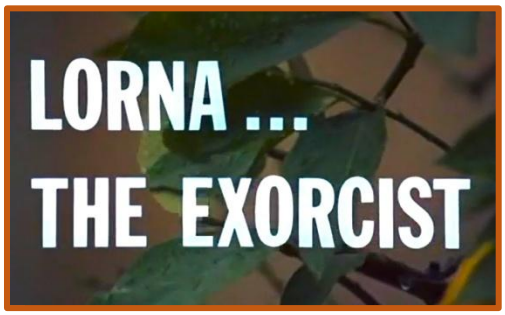
Film Credits

The majority of the following credits are sourced from Stephen Thrower's essential two-volume set ***Murderous Passions: The Delirious Cinema of Jesús Franco*** (Volume 1: 1959-1974) and ***Flowers of Perversion: The Delirious Cinema of Jesús Franco*** (Volume 2: 1975-2013).

Also recommended is the comprehensive ongoing blog by Jess Franco scholar Robert Monell ***I'm in a Jess Franco State of Mind***: **https://robertmonell.blogspot.com/**

Lorna... l'exorciste (1974)

[original France theatrical title]
aka ***Les Possédées du diable***



Alternate Titles
Les Possédées du diable (*Lorna, l'exorciste*) (FR alt. theatrical and FR alt. video)
Linda (USA theatrical/1975)
Luscious Linda (CAN/1977 and US alt. video)
Sexy Diabolic Story (IT theatrical/1981)
Lorna… The Exorcist (BEL press artwork using English title)
The Devil's Possessed

Unconfirmed Title
Les Possédées du démon (FR alt)

Production
Production language: French
Production country: France
Shooting Timeline: April 1974
Distributor: Comptoir Français du Film Production (Paris), Univers Galaxie (Paris) and Tempar Releasing (New York)
France release: August 21, 1974 (int'l releases 1975-1981: USA, Belgium, Canada and Italy)
Runtime: 90-min France (81-min)
Production formats: 35mm
Color type: Eastmancolor

Director: Jess Franco [as Clifford Brown]
Producer: Robert de Nesle
Assistant Director: Richard Deconinck [Bigotini]
Screenwriter/Scenario: Jesus Franco, Nicole Franco [Guettard] (screenplay, adaptation and dialogue/Nicole Franco; onscreen credit to Nicole Franco only) and Robert de Nesle
Director of Photography: Etienne Rosenfeld
Editor: Gérard Kikoïne
Still Photographer: Mario Lippert [Howard Vernon]
Music: André Benichou, Robert de Nesle
Makeup: Catherine Demesmeaker
Costumes: Pamela Stanford's gowns created by Paco Rabanne
Production Acknowledgement: "We thank the municipality and manager of the Casino of La Grande Motte for their gracious assistance supplied during production."]

Cast
Pamela Stanford (Lorna Greene)
Guy Delorme (Patrick Barielle, Linda's father)
Lina Romay (Linda Barielle)
Jacqueline Laurent (Marianne Barielle, Linda's mother)
Howard Vernon (Mauricius, Lorna's henchman)
Bigotini [Richard Deconinck] (Frantel Hotel manager)
Catherine Laferrière (Marielle, the possessed woman)

Uncredited Cast
Jess Franco (doctor)
Ramón Ardid (male nurse and hotel receptionist)
Caroline Rivière (woman on yacht)

♦♦♦

Das Frauenhaus (1977)

[original Swiss and West German title]

aka ***Blue Rita***

[original French title and Belgian theatrical poster title]

Alternate titles

Le cabaret des filles perverses (Cabaret of Perverted Girls) [Belgium French-language theatrical]
Blue Rita: Le cabaret des filles perverses [France press flyer]
Blue Rita: To cabaret ton diestrammenon [Greek DVD version]
The Men's Trap at Paris [1978 trade title reported in *Variety*]
Claire… dove scivola scivola (*Claire… where it's slippery slippery* or
Claire… where it slips it slips) [Italy theatrical) 1984
Claire lingua viva (*Claire Living Tongue*) [Italy alt. theatrical] 1984
Golubaja Rita [Russian version]

Production

Production company: Elite Film AG (Zürich), Comptoir Français du Film Production (Paris)
Production country: co-production Switzerland-France
Shooting Timeline: 1977
Distributor: Avis-Filmverleih, Ascot-Elite Video
France release: (int'l releases 1977-1984: Germany, Switzerland and Italy)
Runtime: 78-min France [95-min may have included hardcore inserts] (72-95-min)
Color type: Eastmancolor

Director: Jess Franco [*Blue Rita* includes hardcore inserts not filmed by Franco]
Producer: Erwin C. Dietrich [France Co-Producer/uncredited: Robert de Nesle]
Director of Photography: Rudolf (Ruedi) Küttel
Music: Walter Baumgartner
Makeup: Jacob Peyer
Costumes: Ellen Salzmann

Cast
Martine Fléty (Rita)
Sarah Strasberg (Princessa)
Dagmar Bürger (Sun/English-language and Sun/German-language)
Pamela Stanford (Gina)
Esther Moser (Rita's henchwoman/shorthaired)
Eric Falk (Janusz Lassard/Janos Lazare aka Colonel Lazar, Western European Chief of the CPPU)

Uncredited Cast
Vicky Mesmin [aka Chantal Virapin] (Moira)
Olivier Mathot (Rolf Sebesky)
Henri Guégan [aka Philippe Guégan] (Inspector Tanner)
Guy Delorme (Mr. Bergen aka Kozinsky)
Angela Ritschard (Rita's henchwoman/longhaired)
Roman Huber (gunman/cream trench coat)
Néné Kaô [Swiss pressbook addition]

♦♦♦

Das Bildnis der Doriana Gray (1975)
[original Switzerland and West German softcore theatrical title]
aka ***Die Marquise von Sade*** and ***Doriana Gray***

Alternate titles
Die Marquise von Sade [Switzerland and West German title/Blu-ray title]
La porno storia della Marchesa De Sade (The Porno Story of the Marquise de Sade) [Italy theatrical]
Marquise de Sade [West German video/DVD cover]
Die Marquise de Sade [Switzerland pressbook]
Doriana Gray [Germany and Switzerland DVD cover]
Dirty Dracula [shooting title]
The Portrait of Doriana Grey [pre-release title in Dietrich's English-language correspondence]

Production
Production company: Elite Film AG (Zürich)
Production country: Switzerland
Shooting Timeline: Beaulieu-sur-Mer (August 1975)/Zürich sets (September 1975)
Distributor: Avis Filmverleih [Switzerland/West German]
Runtime: 69-min 35-sec [German]/76-min [German X-rated]/
78-min 58-sec [Ascot-Elite Blu-ray]

Director: Jess Franco
Producer: Erwin C. Dietrich
Assistant Director: Gerald Cazal [France]
Screenwriter/Scenario: Jess Franco
Director of Photography: Jess Franco [as David Khunne]; Swiss pressbook
Camera Operator: Jess Franco [France]
Music: Walter Baumgartner

Cast
Lina Romay (Lady Doriana Gray/her twin sister)
Monica Swinn (American journalist)
Peggy Markoff (artist)
Ramón Ardid (Xiros, Doriana's manservant)
Martine Stedil (Xiro's girlfriend)
Ronald Weiss (Dr. Orloff)

Uncredited Cast
Christa Lang (nurse)

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