

A FILM BY OLIVER HERMANUS

BEAUTY

(SKOONHEID)



Cast

Deon Lotz – Francois van Heerden
Charlie Keegan – Christian Roodt
Michelle Scott – Elena van Heerden
Albert Maritz – Willem Roodt
Sue Diepeveen – Marika Roodt
Roeline Daneel – Anika van Heerden

Crew

Director – Oliver Hermanus
Producer – Didier Costet
Co-producer – Dylan Voogt
Executive producer – Marvin Saven
Scriptwriters – Oliver Hermanus,
Didier Costet
Director of photography – Jamie Ramsay
Production designer – J. Franz Lewis
Editor – George Hanmer
Music composer – Ben Ludik
Costume designer – Reza Levy
Sound – Ian Arrow, Laurent Chassaigne,
Xavier Bonneyrat

Produced by **Equation**, in association
with **Moonlighting Films**.

Technical details

2.35 / Dolby 5.1
in English and Afrikaans
99 min
France / South Africa

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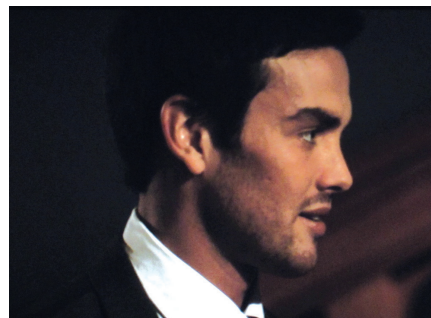
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Oliver Hermanus biography

The Cape Town-born Oliver Hermanus has Bachelor of Arts degree in Film, Media and Visual Studies. After graduating, he worked as a press photographer with a national news agency in South Africa. He completed his Master of Arts degree at the London Film School, after receiving a private scholarship in 2006.

His graduation feature film, «Shirley Adams», premiered in competition at the Locarno International Film Festival in 2009. Oliver was nominated for the Sutherland Award at the London Film Festival and the Ingmar Bergman Debut award at the Goteborg Film Festival.

The film has won numerous prizes around the world including the Grand Prix at the Amiens International Film Festival and three awards at the Durban Film Festival. In 2009 Oliver was selected to attend the 19th session of the Cannes film Festival's Cinefondation in Paris.



Filmography

- 2008 **Shirley Adams**, debut feature film (92 mins)
- 2007 **Yumna**, short film (12 mins)
- 2007 **Interior**, short film (4 mins)
- 2005 **The Second Floor**, documentary (26 mins)

Director's note

This story is very much the exploration of one man's self-destruction. His disdain for himself. His hatred. We are privy to the different, compartmentalized sections of his life, his secrets and desires. We witness his violence, his fears, his anger and his jealousy.

Francois should not be easily dismissed or relegated to being a 'negative character'. My intention as the filmmaker is to explore his contorted and troubled existence with a concern for authenticity, realism and a sober interest in showing his tragedy and his brutality without judging him. The reality of this character in post-apartheid South Africa is that he represents a minority grouping in a country that was ruled by the minority for centuries and now is ruled by the majority. Francois speaks a language that is not spoken in any other part of the world, he has a heritage that is stigmatized as being racist and hateful. He was raised to be wary of the black man and to embrace conservative values. He lives in a city that was once the capital of this regime, and is still a bastion of its former glory. Francois fears the country he lives in because he is perceived as the guilty party, the color of his skin, the language he speaks, the blood that runs through his veins are all symbols of a brutal and unjust past. The collective guilt and subconscious need to defend their heritage are what most conservative Afrikaners battle with everyday.

And beyond this, Francois, like millions of men around the world, is humiliated and ashamed of his sexual preference. The combination of these imploding tensions and the mastery of his ability to control his emotions is the starting point of this film. Seeing how his life works, how he has psychologically and geographically mapped his life, secrets and emotions.

Then, we witness as he suddenly loses control of his boundaries and breaks his own rules. We follow him on a journey that is not uncommon – we have all been the victim of unrequited love, and are bound to a character who, at the age of 45 years old, is exploring his wants and pursuit of happiness for the first time. A journey that is conflicted and laced with self-loathing.

Francois has the habit of watching people, of being a voyeur, always guarding his true thoughts and intentions. Visually I would adopt this character trait and allow the audience to witness moments and sequences as Francois. To be completely connected to him and given equal chance to interpret moments and gestures as he does. Furthermore, my intention is to document situations and details of contemporary South Africa as I see them – the still very present double standards of conservatism, that masks outdated racist ideologies, the cosmopolitan and almost surprising sexual underground of Cape

Town and then most importantly a comment on 'Beauty'. Christian, the object of Francois' affection, is a man born with a physical form and 'beauty' that gives him power in the world. It gives him currency to manipulate and take from the world what he wants. Francois is in turn disarmed and disgusted by Christian's power. He wants to be him, own him, 'have him' yet the ease with which Christian floats through life, the charm of his form enrages Francois to the core. It is this conflicted reaction in Francois that becomes the centre of his downfall and the element of this situation that is most central to my intentions socially and politically.

This journey is psychological above all else, we are privy to the workings of a man who goes beyond a point of no return, who crosses a moral barrier and who realizes that he knows nothing of love or happiness. That he knows nothing about joy, and in the end, a man who has no character, no true self, because everything that he has built up around him - his wife, his children, his secrets and lies have rendered him lost, without any hope of freedom.

Oliver Hermanus

Synopsis

Francois van Heerden, a mid-40s, white, Afrikaans-speaking family man, has become devoid of any care or concern for his own measure of happiness, and so convinced of his ill-fated existence, that he is wholly unprepared when a chance encounter unravels his clean, controlled life.