



79

Locarno Film Festival

CONCORSO INTERNAZIONALE
OFFICIAL SELECTION

Objet a

A film by Ann Oren


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Original Title	Objet a
Year of Production	2026
Nationality	Germany - Luxembourg - Greece
Language	German
Genre	Body Pleasure Mystery
Duration	95 min
Aspect Ratio	SCOPE 2.39:1
Sound	5.1

CAST

Anne Schwarz	Ingeborg
Louis Hofmann	Adam
Simone Bucio	Gaia
Georg Friedrich	Gerhard
Sofia Kokkali	Magdalena

CREW

Writer & Director	Ann Oren
Co-writer	Geoffroy Grison
Executive Producers	Kristof Gerega, Fabian Altenried, Sophie Ahrens, Donato Rotunno, Vicky Miha
Production Company	Schuldenberg Films
Co-production	Tarantula Luxembourg, Asterisk*
Cinematography	Juan Sarmiento G.
Production management	Julia Terrey
Art Director	Janina Schimmelbauer, Marie Janezic
Production Design	Audrey Hernu
Costume Design	Carmen di Pinto
Editing	Hansjörg Weißbrich
Soundtrack	Kyan Bayani
Sound	Persefoni Miliou
Sound mix	Aaron Baustert



SYNOPSIS

Ingeborg and Adam are visionary hand surgeons bound by love, control, and irresistible fixations. She is compelled to steal objects; he longs to become one. When an accident brings the enigmatic Gaia into their lives, unexpected desires begin to take shape, unsettling the careful balance that has long defined their relationship.



ANN OREN
DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I'm interested in human desire, and in how it connects us to the rest of the natural world, because every species desires something. I observe my human characters as desiring biological phenomena, same as I do animals, plants or fungi – and by that I aim to compress the difference between us and other species. Through constant attention to bodily sensations, I explore our animal instincts, or the 'gut feeling', the role of our senses in our decision-making process. This embodied intuition is simply another form of intelligence we possess, and it guides my cinematic gaze.

It begins with fetish. We all have our object fixations, the most contemporary of which are our smartphones that we touch, hold and caress most of the day. Essentially aid objects, they subject us to brain rot and dependency, like modern "crutches" we assign to ourselves. My story follows a couple whose sexual and emotional relationship is expressed through objects. For the film, I opted for analog orthopaedic aid objects: an actual crutch and a corset. The need for them, in the first place, Ingeborg and Adam have caused themselves: Ingeborg as a consequence of her vice, and Adam

as a passionate self-inflicted injury with the hope of getting closer to her again. I wanted the film to be led by the sense of touch, the first sense offered to us at birth. Hands naturally become a central motif. Ingeborg is a kleptomaniac who experiences uncontrollable compulsions to grab unnecessary objects that are not hers. Her fingertips are extremely sensitive, to a level of becoming her erogenous zone. The couple lives in a controlled bubble. With their distinct lifestyle, they came to me as a reflection on modern intimacies, doing everything to control our bodies and emotions.

But with Gaia's arrival, a character I conceptualised as a magic mushroom, the couple enters a transformative experience. Her smell and sweat contain psilocybin, the psychedelic component in magic mushrooms, which temporarily disrupts established thinking patterns, and that's why we see the familiar from a new perspective. George Bataille described the ecstatic experience that often follows, between religious mysticism and eroticism, together with the disappearance of the self, or "ego loss", in order to dissolve into a bigger Other: a collective, a god or nature.

ANN OREN
DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

During my writing process, I researched, grew, filmed, cooked, and consumed various types of mushrooms. Fungi are neither animals nor plants; only 4 percent of its species are known to us, and there is a lot to be learned from their unique intelligence. Increasingly, fungi are also being used in science and design: from mycelium-based packaging and construction materials, to psychedelic-assisted therapy for depression and end-of-life care, to radiotrophic species capable of metabolising radiation, as seen in Chernobyl, and the list goes on.

The intervention of nature in the life of this fetishistic duo is not coming to moralise them, but rather to observe the transformative abilities of desire. Kinks, after all, unfold dramaturgically over our lifetime, shaping our identities as well as our behaviour. Their fetishistic pleasures eventually morph into ecosexuality – a way of reimagining the earth as a lover. Ecosexuality is an actual movement that combines sex-positivity with environmental activism, inviting people to view our planet as a partner in order to inspire us to protect it from climate change and exploitation.

The film ends with an invitation to care for it not out of anxiety for our own future, but by being in awe of it.

With Adam, *Objet a* explores the psyche of a generation raised on constant apocalyptic predictions. On the one hand, the climate crisis is on his mind obsessively, and on the other hand, is his alienation from his own body. His fixation with controlling and sculpting his body reflects this anxiety, even down to the act of holding in his bodily fluids, subconsciously deterred from bringing children into a world in crisis. His anxiety reveals a broader paradox: the more control we have over our bodies, the more we feel disconnected from the natural world we are a part of.

The film embraces emotional and narrative ambiguity in order to stimulate the imagination of the viewer, who has become accustomed to being spoon-fed intentions, shaped by the “Netflixisation” and the “Tiktokisation” of cinema.

“Objet a” is a term borrowed from Jacques Lacan. It’s not an object; rather, it’s what sets our desire in motion: those phantasmic features wrapping who or what we desire.





ANN OREN BIOGRAPHY

Ann Oren is a Berlin based visual artist and filmmaker. By dissolving distinctions between plant, animal and human, she asks what it is to be human today, in an ecosystem immersed in digital culture. Playing with animality and unconventional desires, she employs a visceral language, drawing attention to the physicality of both performers and viewers.

She first studied Film and later received an MFA in Fine Arts, both from The School of Visual Arts, New York. Her first narrative feature film *PIAFFE* premiered at Locarno Film Festival's International Competition and was presented in dozens of festivals including San Sebastián and BFI London, winning numerous awards including the Silver Hugo Award at the Chicago International Film Festival and Best Debut from The German Film Critics' Association.

Filmography:

2024 *Pirouette* (short)
2022 *Piaffe* (feature)
2020 *Passage* (short)

INTERVIEW

WITH ANN OREN

Q: Can you introduce *Objet a* in your own words? What first sparked the idea for the film?

A: This film brings us back to core questions about what it is to be a human being today, on this planet, the species that we are. In times of tech-fascism, war, and climate catastrophes, inside our little bubbles we forget what we all share. We are missing the bigger picture. The film addresses the human condition that leads us to the disaster we are in right now.

Objet a started with a contemplation on our current experience of touch. We touch flat screens more than our lovers' skins. What's happening to our deprived fingertips? I imagined zombie-like, hungry fingers. Then came a bubbled couple who communicates through objects.

Q: How did you approach creating the characters?

A: Ingeborg came to me first, led by her obsession to touch and grip the objects she is attracted to – an animal instinct that acts as her vice. Adam came to me as an equally obsessive character, but disconnected from his own body. They are bound by their desire to touch and to be touched. Both deny their genitals, having fetishistic sex without sex, which I think is interesting given the current recession of the act reported among young people. In fact, pleasures are reduced to eyes, fingers and flatscreens, while the rest of the body disappears.

I conceptualised Gaia as a surreal character from the beginning, who gradually affects them like a psychedelic mushroom. She'd sweat psilocybin from the mushrooms she holds in her underarms, and so she embodies the mushroom. Since I had worked with Simone Bucio before, I wrote this part especially for her. When you have a good collaboration with an actor, it is very exciting to imagine what characters you could build with them.

INTERVIEW

WITH ANN OREN

Q: The film creates a world that feels both familiar and strangely uncanny. How did you work with your collaborators—whether in cinematography, production design, or sound—to build that atmosphere?

A: In the writing process I imagine certain bodily intuitions for the characters, which would lead their choices. Some very specific images, too. I express those to my collaborators, and they push the film's world – each with their own expertise – to a much more intense level to realise my vision. I was lucky to have very creative and trusting collaborators.

Q: Your films often resist clear explanations and instead invite audiences into a sensory experience. How important is ambiguity in your storytelling?

A: A film can only be powerful, seduce and dig into the psyche of the viewer when it possesses some level of ambiguity. It leaves room for the spectators to find themselves in the film, without restricting their freedom of interpretation, and provoking their imaginary.

Q: After audiences leave the screening, what conversations or reflections do you hope *Objet a* inspires?

A: What means of control do we self-impose on our bodies? How are our intuitions, fears, pleasures and anxieties influenced by it? What can be learned from the kind of intelligence other species possess? Where do we see ourselves within the natural order? And always – why do we want what we want?





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