



## La belle endormie

### The Sleeping Beauty

Catherine Breillat

FRANCE, 2010  
French

82 minutes ■ Colour/HDCAM  
Production Company: Flach Film/CB Films/  
Arte France

Producer: Jean-François Lepetit,  
Sylvette Frydman  
Screenplay: Catherine Breillat, based on  
the story *La Belle au bois dormant* by  
Charles Perrault  
Cinematographer: Denis Lenoir  
Editor: Pascale Chavance  
Production Designer:  
François-Renaud Labarthe  
Sound: Yves Osmu, Sébastien Noiré,  
Emmanuel Croset  
Principal Cast: Carla Besainou,  
Julia Artamanov, Kérian Mayan,  
David Chausse

Production: Flach Film,  
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(see page 440)

Catherine Breillat's bracing explorations of female mythologies find epic resonance in her latest film. *The Sleeping Beauty* sees the eminent filmmaker working at the height of her powers, something those fortunate enough to have seen her beguiling canon at TIFF Cinematheque this summer have already experienced.

Astonishing landscapes that circumnavigate the globe and a dizzying mix of historical periods provide a backdrop for the little girl at the film's centre. Breillat's cinematographic eye has rarely been expressed on such a large canvas or with such razor-sharp intent.

The beginning is pure fairytale and recalls her previous outing, *Blue Beard*, in its simplicity and sense of foreboding. A young princess is the subject of a tug-of-war among witches, as each struggles to find the suitable antidote to a death sentence inculcated by an evil sister. The well-known story ensues and Breillat integrates into the narrative various worldwide mythologies about little girls in peril. The heroine finds her way back into civilization both through her dreams and through sheer force of will. A particularly poignant chapter finds her ensconced in a conventional family, in love with an older boy and cared for by a loving adopted mother. Lest we forget, this is a Breillat film, so the happiness cannot last. The boy abandons the heroine and her quest to regain his love leads into scenes both real and imagined. These situations recall the more harrowing moments of Breillat's legendary *À ma sœur!*, and her early masterwork *Une*

*vraie jeune fille*. Breillat also borrows bizarre tropes from other ancient tales, infusing the panoply of characters with albino rulers, dwarf station masters, gypsy bandits and enchanted animals.

Few filmmakers find such imaginative methods to explore such complex and difficult political terrain. Breillat is simply one of the most intriguing and surprising filmmakers working today and *The Sleeping Beauty* is a fascinating testament to her abilities.

■ Noah Cowan



Catherine Breillat was born in Bressuire, France. After pursuing acting, as well as writing several novels and screenplays, she made her feature film directorial debut with *Une vraie jeune fille* (75). Her other films include *Tapage nocturne* (79), *36 fillette* (86), *Sale comme un ange* (90), the anthology film *À propos de Nice, la suite* (co-director, 95), *Parfait amour!* (96), *Romance* (99), *À ma sœur!* (00), *Brève traversée* (01), *Sex Is Comedy* (02), *Anatomie de l'enfer* (04), *Une vieille maîtresse* (07), which screened at the Festival, *Blue Beard* (09) and *The Sleeping Beauty* (10).

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