

# KINO LORBER

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presents

## TOUCH ME NOT A FILM BY ADINA PINTILIE

**\*\*WINNER | GOLDEN BEAR | 2018 BERLINALE\*\***

**\*\*WINNER | BEST FIRST FEATURE | 2018 BERLINALE\*\***

ROMANIA - GERMANY - CZECH REPUBLIC - BULGARIA - FRANCE / 125' / 2018

Run Time: 125 minutes

Color, Aspect Ratio: 1.85 : 1

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## SYNOPSIS

*Touch Me Not* centers on a filmmaker (Adina Pintilie) and characters she documents who together venture into a deep, personal soul-searching into how to achieve real human intimacy. On the fluid border between reality and fiction, the film follows the emotional and sexual journeys of various, diverse subjects offering deeply empathic insights into their personal lives. Craving intimacy - yet also deeply afraid of it - they each work to overcome old patterns, defense mechanisms and taboos...to cut the cords of inhibition and finally be set free. The film is an astonishingly honest look at how we can find intimacy in the most unexpected ways and how to love another without losing ourselves.

## DIRECTOR ADINA PINTILIE



ADINA PINTILIE is a Romanian filmmaker and visual artist, whose works have screened at many prestigious international film festivals. Her new feature TOUCH ME NOT was awarded the Golden Bear at 68th Berlin International Film Festival in 2018 and is having its North American premiere at Toronto International Film Festival. She graduated in 2008 from the National University of Drama and Film Bucharest. She's considered an important filmmaker to

watch as part of the new Romanian cinematic wave and her work borders between fiction, documentary and visual arts and stands out through a highly personal visual style, with the courage to experiment in cinematic language and an uncompromising exploration of human psyche.

Her medium length film DON'T GET ME WRONG (produced by Aristoteles Workshop, supported by ARTE France, the Romanian Cinema Center and the Romanian National Television) premiered in Locarno 2007 (Filmmakers of the Present Competition), screened at 2007 IDFA (Best of Fests), won the Golden Dove Award for Best Documentary at DOK Leipzig 2007, and was selected and awarded in over 50 international film festivals including, Thessaloniki, Montpellier, Trieste, Namur, Documenta Madrid, Munchen, Moscow, Sarajevo, Warsaw, Krakow, Docupolis, Barcelona and more.

Her previous film OXYGEN premiered in the Rotterdam Tiger Awards Short Film Competition in 2010 and also screened in various international festivals like Buenos Aires BAFICI, Montpellier, Thessaloniki, Tampere, Bilbao and more. OXYGEN was nominated for the Best Short Film Award and for the Young Hope Award at the Romanian Film Industry Awards GOPO 2011. Her short film, DIARY#2, a co-production with Romania and The Netherlands, won the ZONTA Award at Oberhausen International Short Film Festival 2013 and was screened in Sofia Film Festival (Best Balkan Shorts 2014) and Belo Horizonte International Short Film Festival 2013, while her previous short SANDPIT#186 (co-director: George Chiper) premiered in Locarno 2008 (Author's Shorts section), won the Runner-Up Award at the Miami International Film Festival 2009 and was awarded a Special Mention at the Trieste International Film Festival 2009 .

### **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

“When I was twenty, I thought I knew everything about love, about how a healthy intimate relationship should be, how desire functions. Today, after twenty years of trials and tribulations, all the views that I had on intimacy back then lost their definition and grew more and more complex and unsettlingly contradictory. As a reflection of this personal journey, TOUCH ME NOT is an artistic research about the human longing and yet (in)ability to touch and be touched, to make contact.

Intimacy plays a central role in human experience, having its roots in the initial physical, emotional and psychological bond between the mother and the newborn. It is through this primary attachment that the infant has the first contact with the world and starts building its sense of self. This initial contact shapes the infant's brain, profoundly influencing its self-esteem, its

expectations of others, and later, how it bonds and approaches intimacy as an adult. Beyond its crucial role in identity formation, healthy intimacy at an individual level has major implications at community level, allowing a psychosocial network of human beings connected through solid emotional attachments. Dysfunctional intimacy within the family nucleus fosters fertile ground for further conflict, abuse, discrimination and prejudice at a larger, social and political scale.

TOUCH ME NOT aims to become a space for (self)reflection and transformation, where the viewer is challenged to deepen their knowledge of human nature and to re-evaluate their experience and ideas about intimate human relationships, with a particular focus on de-objectification and personalization of human exchange, on stimulating our curiosity about the different “Other” and our empathic ability to place ourselves into the Other’s skin. I personally believe that understanding the human nature and exercising our capacity to perceive the other as another me, as another possibility of our own self, can have an essential transformative power, both of our inner self and of the way we interact with the others. As Gustav Landauer notes: “Society is not something which can be changed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we change it by changing our mode of relating, by behaving differently.”

### **ON REALITY AND FICTION FILMMAKING**



“I’ve always been particularly interested in my own intimate relationship with reality as a filmmaker. I work a lot with reality and I don’t believe there is a border between reality and fiction, there is just cinema, as subjective experience of reality. The main level where the reality versus fiction dialectics comes into play is the actual filmmaking process: not only in terms of using the creative potential of real locations and events, but also, and particularly, in working with the characters. The cast is a mix of professional and non-professional actors. Extensive improvisation workshops experiment approaches like family constellation, re-enactment, “staging” reality, intimate diary, enacting characters’ dreams and fantasies etc., in order to build the characters based on the participants’ real emotional backgrounds and to reveal deeper and deeper layers of the characters’ inner truth. Fiction functions as a framework to work with reality, while at the same time offering a safe, protective space for the people who took the risk to open themselves and share their soul with us in the process. I do “cast” a person to embody a “character”, but the character becomes “real” while I work with the private history of the person embodying it, whose biography, personal memories etc. become thus hybrid part of the emotional flesh of the character. The human being on screen is a new, complex, full of contradictions creature, a hybrid between my own material and their own biography.

What is at the same time fascinating and deeply moving for me during this process is the unexpected way reality and fiction mirror and inform each other, how the boundaries between them become more and more blurred, how the cinematic experience can change reality and the other way around, both for the characters and for myself as a filmmaker. All along this process, I gradually discovered how all these people deal in fact, in different forms, with the same isolation, how they are all caught in the same trap, between a deep need for intimacy and a huge fear of it. Yet, I am not interested at all in a mere “inventory of solitude”. What fascinates and deeply touches me are the unexpected ways in which people try to get out of their inner prison, to get back in touch with their own bodies and emotions. I discover again and again that at the core of the most intriguing and often outrageous human behaviour there is, most of the times, a deep unrelinquished need to love and be loved. Whereas my emotional journey with TOUCH ME NOT characters reveals to me a lot about my own unconscious defence mechanisms and projections, preconceptions, distorted perceptions in intimacy, irrational behaviours etc. I see myself reflected in each of these human beings, in different moments/ stages of my life, like in a fragmented mirror made of both real and possible glass pieces. “Madame Bovary is me” or could definitely be me.”

## CAST

### LAURA BENSON

**LAURA BENSON** is a bilingual English/French actress living in Paris since 1981. She trained at the prestigious Nanterre Amandiers theatre school directed by Patrice Chéreau and Pierre Romans. Her first film was *Hôtel de France* (1987) directed by Patrice Chéreau. She made her debut on stage interpreting the part of Anna Petrovna in Chekhov's *Platonov*, a play also directed by Patrice Chéreau (1987). She has worked on stage with a number of directors such as Pierre Romans, Luc Bondy, Irina Brook, Stuart Seide. In 2003, together with Nathalie Bensard, she conceived and co-wrote *George* which she produced with her own theatre company. Her performance brought her a 'revelation' nomination at the 2005 Molières theatre awards. Her film credits include Jacques Doillon's *The Lover*, Stephen Frears' *Dangerous Liaisons*, Alain Resnais' *I Want to Go Home*, and Robert Altman's *Ready-to-Wear*.



*“I didn’t ‘play a part’, I explored feelings and situations – which I shared with the camera – and I entrusted Adina with the responsibility of making sense of what felt like rather chaotic material. I don’t think that I ever said or thought “Laura could or could not do this or that”, since – like in life – the limits are where you put them. And Laura’s limits where no doubt going to be a bit of mine. In daring to share things in the diaries that I filmed, I discovered ways of expressing myself that I would never have imagined. This personal research I think creates a certain quality of presence in the film. Despite the discomfort, I felt safe and I really enjoyed the process. I could hide behind Laura and do and live things that I would never have dared do on my own, yet alone dreamt of doing! This allowed me to explore and discover areas that I would never have thought of going to.”*

## TÓMAS LEMARQUIS

After growing up in Iceland and France, TÓMAS LEMARQUIS studied theater at the Cours Florent in Paris and the Reykjavík School of Fine Arts in Iceland. Meanwhile he explored various shamanistic practices and other alternative therapies, his process of personal growth harmoniously combining the spiritual research with the artistic experimentation. He is possibly best recalled for his central role in the 2003 Icelandic film *Nói Albínói*. He also appeared in films such as *Snowpiercer*, *X-Men: Apocalypse* and *Blade Runner 2049*.



*“I’ve been always fascinated by the process of inner transformation. Bringing my shadows to the light. TOUCH ME NOT has been an unique opportunity to continue this work in front of the camera, a process which has been both very scary and exciting. This work process on the fluid border between reality and fiction offered a safe space and tricked my own mind to think I was “acting” someone else. When in reality my subconscious was bringing my own things to the surface to deal with. Adina is a master at creating this sacred space where you lose all directions about who you are, if you are in reality or fiction. You enter a roller-coaster of feelings and emotions and come out at the other end both transformed, with a lot of new questions and with a film. I don’t ask for more.”*

## CHRISTIAN BAYERLEIN

*“I was born in 1975 and I live in the southwestern part of Germany in the Rhine valley and I’m a wheeler with SMA. I studied computer science, now working as a web developer. I’m a nerd, loving Science and Science Fiction – especially Star Trek. I travel a lot, seeing the world is one of my big passions. I love to hang out with friends and go to the cinema as well as enjoying arts*

*and culture. As a political activist, I fight for the rights of disabled people, e.g. for better accessibility or the right to live in the community. I have a big interest in sexuality and disability and run a blog on the topic, called “kissability.de”. I also give talks on the topic and participate in several cultural projects focussing on positive views on (disabled) bodies and empowerment.”*

*“I’m not afraid of this film or myself being attacked. You know, Adina, when they accuse you of exploiting vulnerable human beings such as the disabled ones, just know that the people screaming are precisely those who have no idea about disability, about what us disabled people feel, need, desire. They have their own false concepts about disability. They look at us as vulnerable and as somebody who has to be protected. But that’s actually patronizing, they are putting us down. Like anyone else, I do have the right to enjoy my body, to explore my sexuality and show myself as a sexual being. I believe it is important to show that we, disabled people, have the same desires, dreams, responses to stimuli, like everybody.”*



### **GRIT UHLEMANN**

*“Born in 1976, I am a ceramic artist working in Rhineland Palatinate. I also studied Sculpture and Combined Media in Ireland. My life is about landscape, geology and experiencing different cultures. I travel a lot with my boyfriend Christian. We’ve visited many places in Asia and Europe together. I feel it is important to see different cultures to show that disability doesn’t mean to have to stay at home and feel sorry for yourself. Disabled people in particular need to have a much more varied life. Only in that way can they form their opinions and be more involved in the community. I feel that other disabled people should also have the opportunity as well, to experience travel for example through exchange programs or other financial support. My relationship with Christian over the last three years has been a beautiful one. Our life is so*



*varied and we have a lot to share. Having a disabled partner can be just as rewarding as any other relationship.”*

## **HANNA HOFMANN**

HANNA came “out of the closet” as a transsexual 11 years ago, after 20 years of marriage in a life and a skin in which she never felt home. Since as far as she remembers, she always wanted to be a woman. Reaching her 50s, HANNA finally decided to take the risk and become what she really wanted to be: she left her marriage and family and started a new life as a woman. Around the same time she started practicing sex work.

An intelligent and charming conversationalist, HANNA elegantly moves from her philosophical references (she studied Philosophy), to her experiences in her profession (she makes her living mainly as a real estate agent, complimented by escorting), and to the political and economical crisis in Germany and Europe. She is also an activist for the rights of sex workers and sexual minorities, is an executive member of BEDS (Berufsverband Erotische Und Sexuelle Dienstleistungen) and provides psychological consultancy to her fellow transsexual sex workers. Contrary to preconceptions, her main reason to practice sex work is not money - escorting plays a central role in her search for identity, being a liberating and inspiring playground where she can explore her sexual preferences and fantasies, her seduction power and vulnerabilities, her femininity. She also debates about the therapeutic qualities of her sex work, both for herself and for the client. The escorting services HANNA provides are an intriguing mix of erotic role-play and psychotherapeutic counselling, often having an empowering effect on the clients, as they feel recognized and reassured that their fantasies and desires are not “wrong”, but actually a healthy way to explore themselves.



## IRMENA CHICHIKOVA

Irmena Chichikova made her professional stage debut in *The Art of Sweeping Things Under the Rug* (2008), for which she received a nomination at IKAR (2009) and the award for best female lead role at the ASKEER Theater awards (2009). Following that she performed in *Nirvana* (2009), and in the following year in the play *Construction of the Liberated Imagination* (2010) based on the works of Eugène Ionesco. She then performed in *Duck Hunting* (2012) by Alexander Vampilov at the Bulgarian National Theater. In 2012, she played the lead role in the film *I Am You* (2012) for which she received critical acclaim and won the Best Actress award at the Golden Rose National Film Festival (2012). In 2014 she appeared in *Viktoria* (2014) which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in World Competition. The following year she appeared in *Sound Hunters* (2015) and in 2017 Ilian Djevelevkov's *Omnipresent*.



## SEANI LOVE

Australian-born Seani Love is a male escort specialising in erotic journeys using the wonderful overlaps between Conscious Kink, BDSM and neoTantra. With training in counselling, theater, Urban Tantra and many other hands-on and hands-off modalities, he has won numerous accolades including Sex Worker of the Year at the Sexual Freedom Awards in London in 2015. His work combines techniques from erotic ritual, extreme sensitivity to consent and boundaries and Jungian psychology, to create powerful pathways to empowerment, healing and self-discovery. As an international workshop facilitator, Seani Love has supported many on their journey to places of increased power, sexual expression, body awareness and self-love.



*“Times are changing. We are entering a new phase where we as a species are gaining greater understanding of the sexual impulses we have. Kinks aren’t seen as dysfunctional traits anymore, but increasingly as healthy aspects of normal people’s sex lives. If we attempt to consciously explore our sexual fantasies, we are exploring a part of our subconscious minds and thus we are gaining personal insights, self knowledge and thus wisdom about our own journeys through our world. We are bringing the subconscious processing into the conscious mind for understanding, for exploring and for gaining greater self-awareness.”*

## **PRODUCERS**

### **BIANCA OANA**

Since 2009, BIANCA OANA has been producing, developing and promoting multi-awarded arthouse films, among which: *Toto and His Sisters*, by Alexander Nanau, an international co-production by Strada Film, Alexander Nanau Production, HBO Europe, in association with RTS Radio Television Suisse, TVO Canada, YLE Finland, world sales Outlook Filmsales. *Toto and His Sisters* world premiered at San Sebastian Film Festival 2014, was awarded Grand Prix at Angers Film Festival, Golden Eye Award at Zurich Film Festival, Best Documentary Award at Warsaw Film Festival and has screened in major festivals such as Hot Docs, Dok Leipzig, Tribeca, Stockholm and many others, was nominated for European Film Awards for Best Documentary and for the LUX Prize and was distributed in French and Japanese cinemas with more than 15,000 sold tickets, and later released on DVD.

### **TURN OF THE LIGHTS, BY IVANA MLADENOVIC**

TURN OF THE LIGHTS world premiered at Tribeca Film Festival New York - Viewpoints 2012. The film was the winner of The Heart of Sarajevo for Best Documentary at Sarajevo Film Festival, and got the award for Best Director at Zagreb Dox.

### **IF I WANT TO WHISTLE I WHISTLE, BY FLORIN SERBAN, A ROMANIAN-SWEDISH CO-PRODUCTION BY STRADA FILM AND THE CHIMNEY GROUP**

IF I WANT TO WHISTLE I WHISTLE world premiered at Berlinale 2010. The film was the winner of Berlinale Grand Jury Prize and got the Alfred Bauer Award for Innovation 2010. Since 2015, BIANCA OANA is the producer for Manekino Film of the feature film TOUCH ME NOT.

BIANCA OANA is dedicated to discovering filmmakers with a particular artistic view, regardless of the medium they choose to explore.

### **PHILIPPE AVRIL**

PHILIPPE AVRIL is first and foremost a cinema lover, discovering talents and concerned by all diversities, living in Strasbourg (France) since 1974. His early international co-productions were with Central and Eastern European filmmakers: Dušan Hának (PAPER HEADS, 1994, Slovakia), Petr Václav (MARIAN, 1996, Czech Republic), Valdas Navasaitis (KIEMAS 1999, Lithuania), Bakhtiyar Khudonazarov (LUNA PAPA, 1999, Tajikistan). Since 1997, he's explored co-productions with Asian filmmakers: Park Kwang-su (THE UPRISING, 1997, South-Korea), Aoyama Shinji (EUREKA, 2000, Japan), Garin Nugroho (A POET, 2001,

Indonesia), Sabiha Sumar (KHAMOSH PANI, 2003, Pakistan), Vimukthi Jayasundara (THE FORSAKEN LAND, 2005, Sri Lanka, BETWEEN TWO WORLDS, 2009, Sri Lanka, CHATRAK, 2011, India), Murali Nair (VIRGIN GOAT, 2010, India), Wang Bing (THE DITCH, 2010, China), Pepe Diokno (ABOVE THE CLOUDS, 2014, Philippines), Katsuya Tomita (BANGKOK NITES, 2016, Japan) and Phuttiiphong Aroonpheng (MANTA RAY, 2018, Thailand). Since the 2000's, he co-produced also Middle-East and African filmmakers: Monika Borgmann & Lokman Slim (MASSAKER, 2005, TADMOR, 2016, Lebanon), Haile Gerima (TEZA, 2008, Ethiopia), Malek Bensmaïl (CHINA IS STILL FAR, 2009, Algeria), Licínio Azevedo (THE TRAIN OF SALT AND SUGAR, 2016, Mozambique). Other co-productions (mainly French and European) include: COLOSSAL YOUTH, by Pedro Costa (Portugal, 2006), LA FINE DEL MARE, by Nora Hoppe (Germany, 2006), WELCOME TO BATAVILLE, by François Caillat (France, 2007), THE DAY WILL COME, by Susanne Schneider (Germany, 2009), THE END OF SILENCE, by Roland Edzard (France, 2011), THE FIFTH SEASON, by Peter Brosens & Jessica Woodworth (Belgium, 2012), LEFT FOOT RIGHT FOOT, by Germinal Roaux (Switzerland, 2013), BETWEEN 10 AND 12, by Peter Hoogendoorn (The Netherlands, 2014), HUNTING SEASON, by Natalia Garagiola (Argentina, 2017).

In total, from 1992 to 2018, PHILIPPE AVRIL has contributed to 44 author films all over the world: 15 as executive producer, 26 as co-producer, 3 as associate producer. He's worked on 35 feature films and 9 documentaries; 17 directorial debuts and 9 second works; 23 co-productions outside Europe. Many of the films he has worked on have won awards at major festivals like Cannes, Venice, Berlin, Locarno and others.

## CAST

LAURA BENSON  
TÓMAS LEMARQUIS  
CHRISTIAN BAYERLEIN  
GRIT UHLEMANN  
ADINA PINTILIE  
HANNA HOFMANN  
SEANI LOVE  
IRMENA CHICHIKOVA  
RAINER STEFFEN  
GEORGI NALDZHIEV  
DIRK LANGE  
ANNETT SAWALLISCH

## CREW

written, directed and edited by ADINA PINTILIE  
produced by MANEKINO FILM – BIANCA OANA, PHILIPPE AVRIL, ADINA PINTILIE  
co-producers ROHFILM PRODUCTIONS – BENNY DRECHSEL PINK – RADOVAN SÍBRT  
& ALŽBĚTA KARÁSKOVÁ AGITPROP – MARTICHKA BOZHILOVA LES FILMS DE  
L'ÉTRANGER – PHILIPPE AVRIL  
with the support of ROMANIAN FILM CENTER, EURIMAGES, MITTELDEUTSCHE  
MEDIENFÖRDERUNG TORINOFILMLAB, CZECH FILM FUND, BULGARIAN  
NATIONAL FILM CENTER EUROMÉTROPOLE DE STRASBOURG  
with the participation of HBO ROMANIA, ROMANIAN TELEVISION SOCIETY  
with the contribution of SENSIBLU, CHRISTIAN TOUR  
in cooperation with THE POST REPUBLIC  
director of photography GEORGE CHIPER-LILLEMARCK  
composer IVO PAUNOV  
additional music EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN  
sound designer DOMINIK DOLEJŠÍ  
sound mixer MAREK POLEDNA  
sound recording VESELIN ZOGRAFOV  
casting FLORENTINA BRATFANOV, TANJA SCHUH, MAYA SERRULLA MAGDALENA  
ILIEVA, IVAN KOTSEV  
script supervisor ANDRA BĂRBUICĂ  
costume designer MARIA PITEA  
make-up artist IOANA COVALI  
hair stylists ALEX GHERASE, MILEN IVANOV  
delegate producer MONICA LĂZUREAN-GORGAN  
line producer BIANCA OANA  
production managers CĂTĂLIN NEAGOE, NICOLE ZSCHERNY  
associate producers KARSTEN FRANK, NEDA MILANOVA, ANNE GRANGE, ANAMARIA  
ANTOCI LAURA GEORGESCU-BARON, ANCA VLĂSCEANU, ANA ALEXIEVA  
developed with the support of CREATIVE EUROPE MEDIA, TORINOFILMLAB ATELIER  
DE LA CINÉFONDATION (FESTIVAL DE CANNES) CINEMART (IFF ROTTERDAM),  
CINELINK (SARAJEVO IFF) S.E.E. CINEMA NETWORK, BINGER FILMLAB, NIPKOW  
PROGRAMM  
presented at THE VENICE GAP FINANCING MARKET 2016 international sales DOC &  
FILM INTERNATIONAL

**About Kino Lorber:**

With a library of 2,000 titles, Kino Lorber Inc. has been a leader in independent art house distribution for 35 years, releasing 30 films per year theatrically under its Kino Lorber, Kino Classics, and Alive Mind Cinema banners, garnering six Academy Award® nominations in nine years, including last year's documentary nominee *Fire at Sea*. Current and upcoming releases include *Let the Corpses Tan*, *Chef Flynn*, *Of Fathers & Sons*, Golden Bear winner *Touch Me Not*, Jean-Luc Godard's *The Image Book*. In addition, the company brings over 300 titles yearly to the home entertainment and educational markets through physical and digital media releases. With an expanding family of distributed labels, Kino Lorber handles releases in ancillary media for Zeitgeist Films, Carlotta USA, Adopt Films, Raro Video, and others, placing physical titles through all wholesale, retail, and direct to consumer channels, as well as direct digital distribution through over 40 OTT services including all major TVOD and SVOD platforms.