

A Thomas Imbach Film

MARY'S RIDE

Produced By

Okofilm Productions, Zurich (*Das Fräulein, Lenz*), Samson Films, Dublin (*Once, Cairo Time*),
Sciapode, Paris (*Over your Cities Grass will grow*)



Portrait of a Young Venetian Woman by Albrecht Dürer, 1505

SYNOPSIS



The beautiful, the bold and the damned. How a queen lost a kingdom to love...

Queen of Scotland at the tender age of six days, Queen of France at the age of 16, widowed at 18 and again at 23, married for the third time by the age of 25, Mary Stuart had reached her zenith before her 25th birthday.

Mary Stuart is batted back and forth by the kings of France and England, who use her as pawn in their struggle for power. Four women, loyal friends since early childhood, cannot guard her against their deadly intrigues. But Mary is also prey to her own unbridled passions. Although married she throws caution to the wind: engaging in a dangerous love affair with one of her men.

Sensing defeat at the hands of her enemies, Mary turns in desperation to her cousin, Queen Elizabeth of England. It is a fatal move. Instead of coming to her aid, Elizabeth keeps her under arrest for many years. This does not prevent Mary from conspiring a return to power, but her plans fail.

A Queen from cradle to grave (1542–1587), within one year Mary destroys her life and career in an unprecedented descent into hell. Forever proud and wilful, Mary stages her own execution as a coronation, defiantly demonstrating to Elizabeth and the world that she is the one and only victorious queen.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Mary's Ride tells the life of Mary, Queen of Scots from the cradle to the grave, without the pomp of the classical period drama. How is this possible?

We concentrate on Mary's turbulent inner life and its reflection in her relationships with those who were closest to her. We are drawn directly into the historical and political context of her life, through unadorned access up the back stairs of Mary's castles.

The biography *Mary Stuart* by Stefan Zweig (1935) inspired me to place less emphasis on the external drama of Mary's life and history and, instead, give priority to her extraordinarily passionate nature, which erupted like a volcano beneath the genial charm and self-confidence that marked the height of her reign in Scotland. In order to understand this climax, we need an insight into Mary's origins and her finale. Thus, the film is composed of three parts: her childhood in France (I) the turbulent years in Scotland (II) and her imprisonment in England (III). *Mary's Ride* is like a contemporary triptych, with each part distinguished by its own colour and rhythm.

I have based Mary's character on the "real" woman and queen that I found in the countless sources I studied. For the cinematic translation, however, I am more committed to my own personal truth, than to the historical truth. Reality has been the inspiration for an intense, subjective narrative.

As I became more involved with Mary, I realized that a study of the soul of such an exceptional person must be about portraying powerful human emotions, of the kind that have become so rare in modern, fast-paced society and that were rare even in Mary's time. People are generally expected to be pragmatic and understanding, willing to compromise and in control of themselves. We tend to invest only as much as we believe we will get in return. But only few people have the privilege of truly experiencing unconditional devotion and the fulfilment of burning passion. It is an important aim of the movie to recapture this archaic emotion, this wild and reckless passion, and convey it to a movie audience.

Obviously, I'm not only committed to the subject matter of this credo; I also want the style and the actual making of the movie to reflect the courage to take a risk:

- We will shoot on location in order to create an authentic feeling of the characters' circumstances and lives.
- The extremes of Mary's life will be told by a combination of a few characters and objects, insignificant in themselves but crucial to Mary's story: a pair of pear-shaped pearl earrings; a pistol; some embroidery; a comb; a few wild flowers and a breviary.
- Instead of extravagant scenes and picturesque settings, typical of costume dramas, the atmosphere of a bygone era will be conjured by simple details.
- Landscapes will not be illustrative, but a reflection of the inner landscapes of the soul.
- We will work partly with a firm, handheld camera to illuminate the characters with more precision.
- We will use little artificial light and focus on historical light sources like candles, torches, oil lamps and, of course, daylight.
- We will work with a colour concept, in which France appears primarily in yellow, Scotland primarily in brown and England primarily in dark red.
- Costumes will be rather plain and look worn, sometimes dirty. This will allow us to focus more on Mary's inner glow, than her outer appearance, in order to emphasize that people were not all nice and clean at the time.
- The score will be inspired by music from Stuart's era.
- Sound Design will be a very important means to create the time travel into the 16th century.

Mary's Ride will be brought to the screen as a cinematic ride through the savage and spectacular terrain of the unbridled soul of a woman, who had the courage to break out of her royal corset and remain faithful to her real nature.

DIRECTOR'S PROFILE

THOMAS IMBACH is a Swiss maverick director, whose work is visual, edgy and performance driven. In 2007 he founded Okofilm Productions together with director/producer Andrea Štaka. *With Well Done* (1994) and *Ghetto* (1997) he established his trademark audio-visual style based on a combination of cinema-verité camera-work and fast-paced computer controlled editing. His fiction features *Happiness is a Warm Gun* (2001), *Lenz* (2006), *I was a Swiss Banker* (2007) and his latest work, the documentary auto-fiction *Day Is Done* (2011), all premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival.

COMPANY PROFILES

OKOFILM PRODUCTIONS was founded in 2007 by the internationally acclaimed directors Andrea Štaka (*Das Fräulein*, which won the Golden Leopard at Locarno and the Heart of Sarajevo for Best Film and Actress, both in 2006) and Thomas Imbach with the aim of producing independent and artistically ambitious films for theatrical distribution. The films will originate in Switzerland, but will be received and distributed internationally. The company is targeting circulation in renowned A-list festivals and international arthouse distribution.

Okofilm is currently producing three new projects. *Cure* (Girls, in financing) is the new feature film project by Andrea Štaka. Her previous film *Das Fräulein* (2006) won the Golden Leopard in Locarno and the Heart of Sarajevo for Best Film and Actress. *Day Is Done*, Thomas Imbach's documentary auto-fiction, will premiere at the Berlinale in February 2011. His new feature film *Mary's Ride*, based on the life of Mary Stuart, is currently in financing/pre-production.

SAMSON FILMS is one of Ireland's leading production companies. In addition to developing its own material, Samson acts as a co-producer and executive producer on a wide range of Irish, European and international feature films. Managing director David Collins is on the executive board of the Irish Film & Television Producers Association, a member of the European Film Academy, and a founding director of the Lighthouse, Ireland's largest art house cinema complex. The company's filmography includes the Academy Award-winning *Once* (John Carney, 2006), *Cairo Time* (Ruba Nadda, 2009), and *The Moth Diaries* (2011), the new project by Mary Harron (*American Psycho*).

SCIAPODE was founded in 2003 to produce European films by strong and ambitious filmmakers. Sciapode works with artists whose backgrounds include not only filmmaking but also visual arts, choreography, theatre and opera, mixing different media to create richer work and new narrative styles. Directors associated with Sciapode include: Sophie Fiennes, Wim Vandekeybus, Andrew Köttling, Wayn Traub, Florent de la Tullaye, David Dusa, Philipp Mayrhofer, Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker. Sciapode's filmography includes *Over Your Cities Grass Will Grow* (Cannes 2009) and *Ivul* (2009).



CREATIVE ELEMENTS

WRITERS Thomas Imbach (CH)
Eduard Habsburg (A)
Andrea Štaka (CRO/ CH)

DIRECTOR Thomas Imbach (CH)

DOP Rainer Klausmann (CH)

CASTING DIRECTOR Leo Davis (UK)
Marie de Laubier (F)
Corinna Glaus (CH)

CAST

MARY Camille Rutherford (F)
RIZZIO Mehdi Dehbi (F)
MARY SETON Roxane Duran (F)
BOTHWELL Sean Biggerstaff (UK)
DARNLEY Aneurin Barnard (UK)
MORAY Edward Hogg (UK)
DE CROC Bruno Todeschini (CH/F)
MARIE DE GUISE Joana Preiss (F)

DISTRIBUTOR Pathé Films (CH)

