

**INTERVIEW TO MARILISA CHRONEA - ACTRESS IN THE  
MOVIE BY EVE SUSSMAN | THE RUFUS CORPORATION  
THE RAPE OF SABINE WOMEN, 2005**

HD video, 83 min – May 2011

**1. What was the day to day experience like of acting in the film? Were you involved during all three years?** Well, the day to day experience changed distinctly according to periods of work. First of all, the discovering process for us actors, the rehearsals, and the final shooting happened at intervals, in a period of time no more than 9 months, from September 2004 to May 2005. This is the period I was involved in the project. Of course the Rufus Corporation had already made its planning and research before meeting the group of Greek actors. And also, after the shooting, Eve worked with the editing group for more than a year.

Initially we met in loosely defined body and voice group improvisations which permitted us to establish an initiation of a common language. We also traveled in the Greek countryside and towns to get to know each other, as Eve was locating sites to shoot in. One of these points was Hydra, which gave us a rich experience for the whole project through improvisations in site specific locations, which interested us for their architectural and natural ambience. That is where we first searched for an identity of our group improvisations.

Then we rehearsed in NY, in the closed atmosphere of a studio, with stricter rules. Basic outlines appeared of scenarios and relationships. We worked in a more precise and intimate language of gestures and silence, as also in group dynamics, which was the basic axis of work throughout the project. All of our procedures throughout rehearsals were recorded by video and photo cameras. So, gradually, we got accustomed to the camera following a normal flow of events, and this resulted into less role-acting and more re-acting to conditions and situations.

In between these rehearsal meetings and until the final rehearsal and shooting period we communicated ideas and reflections on themes through e-mails, as we were also being communicated feedback from recorded material. The final procedure was intense. Communication through gestures and silence had to become a common functioning key to relationships and group evolution. The dramaturge intervened to bridge needs and intentions and preferences. We worked relations in closed spaces and group dynamics in open air theaters. First shooting was the massive group scene in Herodion, where a lot of the tension broke out. Then the experience of the House was a mixture of just being and communicating in condensed codes, taking into account every detail of the environment - from architectural details and furniture, to styles and changing of clothes, to time lapses and to controlled or relaxed atmospheres - and of acting a scenario created of oneself, that was allowed to transform on a moment to moment basis. This was liberating and inspiring at the same time, allowing personal growth and evolution of character that went hand in hand with an intimate personal itinerary of connecting with the character, letting the camera follow not the role, but the actor existing in a role. Shootings in Berlin had to do more with geometry and spaces, with sounds and figures. And the final fight, when shot at the end, I think found actors really not acting anymore, losing techniques and styles, following only the camera's moving instructions. No emotion whatsoever in a very emotional culmination of processes. It was all thrilling.

**2. What other projects have you been involved in with the Rufus Corporation?** None other. But, as Eve introduced us to her work by a projection of *89 seconds at Alcazar*, and because of this project's liaison with the *Rape of the Sabines*, I feel connected to this previous work of hers, as a way of approaching an aesthetic and narrative aim. As, for the future I'd be more than delighted to work with Eve and Rufus in another project, if the occasion arises. So far, this possibility seemed unreachable, because I'd have first to renew myself as a person before working again in a new scenario, since the last experience was for me so strong – as if a culmination of myself and my techniques so far, that I'd have to bring new material in rehearsal to culminate on.

**3. How much influence did you have personally in the making of the film? What were Eve Sussman's working methods as a director?** Even from the first meeting Eve asked the actors to have a double function. Be simultaneously themselves and the role. Also the roles did not exist from the beginning, they would be defined from the course of work. There was a basic outline for a climactic series of events, but also not completely defined. So, there was a lot of space for improvising on relationship and status. Scenario was also influenced by the spaces we worked in and mostly by group dynamics.

In this frame of work, I let myself change from a status of inhibition to a status of trust (as would change the status of the abducted women) which gradually produced some relationship dynamics. So, personal influence, not only mine but every actor's, could be tracked down to this proposition of a personal journey, that Eve was alert and perceptive to read and incorporate in the myth. This of course did not happen randomly. There was a constant feedback on what psychological lines were recorded on camera, and also a mediation of the dramaturge at selected points when Eve decided we should keep or drop an idea. Although at times Eve explained explicitly what she wanted in terms of atmosphere and plot coherence, she did not speak much and I remember having a lot of hesitation talking to her. Lot of the instructions, and especially those having to do with how we would experiment in space and in relationship communication, came to us actors, after being discussed and crystallized within the directing, choreographic and dramaturge team. Also a method she used was, to provoke situations by giving a simple instruction of how to move or stand or look in relation to others. The way the actor used this instruction could work up to the continuation of the scenario, and finally build up a concrete proposition.

**4. Has your opinion of the film changed since its initial release? What do you think of the critical reception?** No, my opinion has not changed. What has changed and has grown is my perception as a viewer. I have seen the film twice on its release in Greece in 2007 and in Milan in 2011. The first time, I could not distance myself from the emotional implication of recalling the life behind the scenes. My main response was that it was a fraction, a top of the iceberg, of all that had been created as working material. So I remained in doubt about what an outside audience would perceive of the film. This last view came to clarify this. As a simple viewer this time, I really could feel the line of emotional tension throughout the film with its distortions of brevity or prolongation of time and senses, and I could savor the quality of impression of each and every atmosphere in this allegory of disintegration. What I appreciated was the film's massive in climax and subtle in texture incorporation of elements. Such guidance of direction of people, locations, points of view, narrative layers, all intertwined through the director's eye to a combustive, climactic narrative with, as I felt, no time defined beginning or end. This could happen anywhere, anytime, to any society or individual existence. As much as we strive for a fulfillment of a desire, the illusion of following the right path always deceives us. We are always more close and more far to an end than what we hoped for. The seed of disintegration lies within our capacity to grow. And the faith of a creator is because it stands against the impossibility. I think the critical reception rightfully stood for the value of this piece as a criticism of modern or of any human society, and as an innovative and powerful aesthetic proposition of a new visual narrative language.

As a final comment, I'd say that my personal acting experience in the film was a discovery and mixture of techniques that served the purpose of a life engaging procedure that happily followed the same line as the film's archetype/abduction/status/corruption/disintegration "mythology". Like the torn dress - nothing left at the end. And this is just. Better keep nothing but remembrance, than keep the ashes of a brilliant coincidence of civilization.