

Michel Houellebecq

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Michel Houellebecq sex film to be released despite attempt to stop it

Amsterdam court dismisses French author's complaint against film that shows him having sex with young women



📷 Michel Houellebecq in 2019. According to the court's verdict, the idea for the experimental porn film had first been proposed to a Dutch art collective by his wife at a Paris dinner in 2022. Photograph: Carlos R Alvarez/WireImage

A Dutch art collective can release an experimental erotic film showing the French novelist [Michel Houellebecq](#) having sex with young women in spite of the author's attempt to stop its circulation, an Amsterdam court has ruled.

Amsterdam's district court on Tuesday afternoon dismissed a legal complaint by Houellebecq and his wife, Qianyun Lysis, that had aimed to curb the distribution of the film *KIRAC 27* by Keeping It Real [Art Critics](#), as well as a trailer that was uploaded on the art collective's website last month but has since been taken down.

The clip shows the 67-year-old enfant terrible of French letters in pyjamas lying on a bed next to a woman in a nightie, smoking and laughing. "I told him that I knew many girls in Amsterdam who would sleep with the famous writer out of curiosity," a voiceover says.

According to the court's verdict, the idea to have the author of *Submission* and *Atomised* star in an experimental porn film to "counteract his gloom" had first been proposed to *KIRAC*'s co-director Stefan Ruitenbeek by Houellebecq's wife at a dinner in Paris in autumn 2022.

Via email, Houellebecq and Ruitenbeek subsequently discussed plans to make "a work of art, in which the distinction between fiction and reality takes shape as a game with the rancorous paranoia of your enemies".

Upon arriving in Amsterdam for filming on 1 December 2022, the writer signed a release form, agreeing to appear in a film that "may or may not include explicit content". The agreement's only restriction was that the film would not show Houellebecq and his genitals in the same shot.

Summarising the original plan for the film, the court said the split between images of faces and genitalia "would leave the viewer in wonder as to whether Houellebecq actually participated in the sex scenes, or whether a stand-in in them was acting for him".

However, on 23 December, three days before the scheduled end of the shoot, Houellebecq walked out on the project. In a letter published on his personal

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website, the writer said his and the Dutch director's "conceptions of artistic work were radically opposed", likening it to "gutter journalism".

In his complaint to the Amsterdam court, Houellebecq argued that he was struggling with severe depression at the time of signing the agreement and had drunk several glasses of wine.

The court dismissed his objection for lack of a doctor's certificate proving Houellebecq's condition, and questioned whether wine had been drunk before rather than after the signing of the agreement.

If the intended ambiguity of the art film had narrowed, the verdict concludes, "it is at least as much the result of Houellebecq's attempts to prevent disclosure of the footage".

Earlier this month another court in Paris rejected a complaint in which Houellebecq had argued the film's trailer damaged his private life and honour, as well as spreading lies about his wife. The film's planned premiere on 11 March was nonetheless postponed due to the two lawsuits.

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The legal row has pitted one of the most flamboyant polemicists of the European literary world against a Dutch group with a similar taste for courting controversy. Under the KIRAC guise, artists Stefan Ruitenbeek, Kate Sinha and Tarik Sadouma have since 2016 released short films on YouTube that explore and make fun of the international art world, often mingling factual and fictional elements in ways that are hard to keep apart.

In interviews, Houellebecq has repeatedly defended the principle of women being paid to have sex, heavily criticising his home country for making prostitution illegal in 2016. In his 2001 novel *Platform*, a semi-autobiographical protagonist called Michel wanders around Thailand as a sex tourist.

While legal action had delayed the editing of KIRAC 27, Ruitenbeek said he expected a final cut of the film, including the disagreement with its star performer, to be released in May.

"It has always been my intention to make an artwork with integrity", Ruitenbeek said in a statement. "Hopefully Michel is happy with the result."

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