

Culture- Film - Monday, April 1, 2024

Struggling to Halt His Own Adult Film

Author Michel Houellebecq wants to stop an adult film he has acted in. The director asks the audience for help. "A visionary project", says the editor of Natt & Dag.

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Over the past year, Dutch director Stefan Ruitenbeek has been in conflict with one of France's best-selling authors: Michel Houellebecq (68).

"It looks like the film will be exceptional", says the director in a recent statement. In 2021, Ruitenbeek's art collective Kirac shot a porn film with Houellebecq. The author later regretted it and has gone to court to have it stopped. Houellebecq has not been successful. Still, the future of the film has been uncertain. Now, the director confirms that the film is coming, but they are facing new challenges.

What actually happened? Ruitenbeek got in touch with Houellebecq in 2019. They agreed to do a project together. In November 2022, the author showed up on set in Amsterdam. Ruitenbeek brought four young women. - You can call it porn if you want. But I see it as a work of art, Ruitenbeek told Aftenposten last February. The director had just learned that Houellebecq would sue him due to "defamatory" and "false" statements in the film's trailer. It was claimed, among other things, that Houellebecq's wife made sure her husband would have access to prostitutes during a trip to Morocco. In a public letter, the author called the trailer "violent" and wrote that his wife "is shattered by the lies." He reiterated his dissatisfaction in the book "Some Months in My Life." Courts in both France and the Netherlands concluded that the contract Houellebecq signed with Kirac gave the art collective the right to use all film material of the author, except for segments where Houellebecq's face and genitalia can be seen at the same time. The court decided that Houellebecq must review the final result before publication. If he is not satisfied, he can sue the Dutch again.

Asking for help in the battle. The film with Houellebecq has evolved into a much larger art project, Kirac reports in a video on its homepage. The drama around the film itself will be included. This has made the project more expensive than planned. Last week, Ruitenbeek thus sent out a plea to Kirac's supporters: - We are in a crucial phase of editing this major project, and we are about to run out of funds, he writes in the email

that Aftenposten has also received. He is asking for financial support. - This will not happen without your help, writes the director. In the new video on Kirac's homepage, he explains that the Houellebecq film is about more than just sex. He sees it as part of a battle between the traditional art that Houellebecq represents, and new art forms, as Kirac creates.

Incredibly visionary.

There are now great expectations for the project, says Eilif Guldvog Hartvedt. He is the social editor at Natt & Dag and has followed the drama from the beginning. He has also interviewed philosophy student Jini van Rooijen, who is one of Houellebecq's co-stars in the film. - The film has grown out of the dimensions it was originally supposed to have a year ago. It's no longer just a film called a porn film, which was supposed to be documentary, but also a bit of fiction. The project now deals more with probing the big questions about what sexuality and art are, thinks Hartvedt. - It is transgressive, but also an incredibly visionary project, says Hartvedt.

Facts.

Michel Houellebecq

→ Born in 1956 on the French island of La Réunion, east of Madagascar.

→ Considered one of France's greatest contemporary authors. Has received several literary awards, including the Goncourt Prize for the novel "The Map and the Territory." This is France's most prestigious literary prize.

→ Among his most famous books are "The Extension of the Battlefield" (1994), "The Elementary Particles" (2000), and "Submission" (2015).

→ Has been involved in several controversies for his harsh statements about Islam and immigration.