

THE
TROUBLE
WITH
NATURE

A FILM BY ILLUM JACOBI

SYNOPSIS

The year **1769**. The **philosopher Edmund Burke** has fled London, debt collectors and a ramping midlife crisis to go on a grandtour of the **Alps** to rewrite his book on the **Sublime** in this 18. century roadmovie.

Stakes are high - Burke has lost everything in risky colonial investments and his future depends on the success of the new edition of his youth masterpiece and his bold face-to-face meeting with nature. Having lost his staff he is traveling only with a native servant on loan from his brother's plantation in the west indies. The trip is a disaster - Burke has never been outside the city and finds himself lost in Provence struggling to even find the Alps. Furthermore he discovers that he hates nature - it stings, itches and fails to give him any enlightenment. Meanwhile his servant is deeply involved with everything around her and Burke grows bitter and jealous of her easy connection to the wild elements. Burke's increasingly desperate and pathetic attempt to unlock the mysteries of the sublime, turns suicidal when he discovers a glacier of sparkling ice that leads up to a divine snow covered peak that he begins to climb thinking he can prove himself the master of nature and revenge the discomforts it has bestowed upon him.

In **The Trouble with Nature** one man's failure to comprehend nature mirrors our own.

It is a highly fictional and absurd allegory of our human relation to the natural world starring one of the principal architects of modern **capitalist** thinking - Edmund Burke (1729 -1797)

THE TROUBLE WITH NATURE

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ANTHONY LANGDON

NATHALIA ACEVEDO

CAST & CREW

Edmund Burke – Antony Langdon

Awak – Nathalia Acevedo

Editor : Alexandra Strauss

Production Designer : Sara Sachs

Cinematographer : Frederik Jacobi

Composers : Danny Bensi & Saunder
Jurriaans

Sound Designer : Adrian Aurelius

Written by : Hans Frederik Jacobsen
& Illum Jacobi

Producers : Illum Jacobi, Xavier
Rocher, Marina Perales Marhuenda
& Katja Adomeit

Director : Illum Jacobi

Adomeit

LA FABRICA NOCTURNA
CINEMA

Antony Langdon

Antony is a British actor and rock musician who appeared in **Velvet Goldmine** and most notably starred in **I'm Still Here** with Joaquin Phoenix. Antony was guitarist in the platinum selling rock band Spacehog. Taking his first lead in *The Trouble With Nature* Langdon plays philosopher Edmund Burke in a fully committed performance that sees him propelled through the Alps, down in to a glacier and near blinded in a snow blizzard near the summit of Mont Blanc.

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Nathalia Acevedo

Nathalia Acevedo is a Mexican actress best known for her acting debut in Carlos Reygadas' **Post Tenebras Lux** which premiered in competition at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival. Her most notable roles since include starring alongside Tadanobu Asano, in Filipino cult director Khavn De La Cruz's, **Ruined Heart** shot by Christopher Doyle premiering at the Tokyo Film Festival and starring in Marialy Rivas' *Princesita*. Portraying Awak with a delicate sensibility Acevedo puts her character into the very fabric of the landscapes and ecology of the Alps.





DIRECTORS NOTES

I am deeply confused by my experiences in the mountains. Sometimes I have felt a mystic connection to something that seems so ancient and eternal. Like nothing and everything at the same time. Other times I felt lost like an alien on my own planet. For years I kept going deeper and deeper into the wilderness, sometime for months, often alone. Perhaps I was trying to scratch my skin in hopes of a rash that might, for a brief moment, prove that I was part of it. In an attempt to understand this search for connection I am now making a series of feature films. This first one takes us back to the 18th century when people first began to identify the sublime. Dwarfed by the subject itself, I decided to move quickly and make a small film with some friends in the Alps before ambitions would compromise the project. Edmund Burke, a political philosopher who originated the term 'sublime' becomes the victim of these fantasies and is re-imagined in the image of our modern self: a man lost in nature, trying to impose his ego and ambitions on the natural world. Like us, he looks to nature to reaffirm his own importance, but finds only his own insignificance. 'The Trouble With Nature' is a story about that inescapable conflict between the indifference of the natural world and the ambition in our own human nature. A conflict reaching a new and terrifying climax as we speak.

PRODUCTION

The Trouble With Nature is produced without any financial support and shot on location with only a three person film crew and two actors. When not walking the production traveled in a fiat 500 and often stayed at mountain refuges. The farmer is played by Pascal Allano a dishwasher cast from the local pizzeria, Gilbert Ravanel is a seventh generation crystal hunter the crew met in the mountains for the improvised cave scene. Hiking hours to remote locations every day without support sometimes blends the lines between fiction and reality. As the story progresses into the high alpine, filming commenced inside ice caves, crevasses and glaciers. The final sequence was filmed in a snow blizzard at nearly 4000 meters on the NW flanks of Mont Blanc. Antony Langdon suffered frost bites in his hands from acting without gloves but everyone pushed the limits to finish the film that was shot in 25 days. The film was picked up in the post production stage by Paris based La Fabrica Nocturna Cinema and producers Xavier Rocher and Marina Perales who brought on editor Alexandra Strauss. Danish producer Katja Adomeit has now taken the project under the wings of Adomeit film who has future projects by illum in development.



INTERVIEW WITH ILLUM JACOBI

The story is based on a historic character, Edmund Burke. What is it that inspired you in this 18th century philosopher ?

Burke wrote a small book about the sublime from his dormitory in London when he was 19 years old. An odd publication with intense speculations about our relationship to the sublime and where it is to be found in nature and not. Burke had never set foot in the wild so I thought this would be an interesting situation to put him in. I find that intellectual ideas often dissolve into a greater sphere in the wilderness. But I also feel awkward and unresolved in my relationship to the natural world and struggle to understand what the sublime is. I wanted to make a film that points to our present estrangement from nature. Why is it so hard for us to develop feelings for the world that is slipping away in our hands?

Could you tell us about your relationship with your actors, Antony Langdon and Nathalia Acevedo ?

Both are dear friends that I called upon to help make this spontaneous fantasy come to life. They have endured impossible conditions, just consider Nathalia carrying that monstrous backpack all over the Alps in slippery leather moccasins! I am humbled by their efforts and dedication to the project. There was a sense of madness on set that I enjoyed and we became very close in our own search for the sublime.

The nature plays an important role in the picture, as the characters wander through lavender fields all the way to the top of the Alps. How did you find the locations for the film ?

I knew from mountaineering that the Mont Blanc massif would have a great variety of scenery from idyllic valleys to Alpine Glaciers in a very compact area that I know very well. I spent a few weeks scouting, but when we started shooting I realised that I had been too optimistic about how far we could trek with gear and costumes so I had to rethink everything. Most mornings I would get up at 6 and hike around to find the locations for the same days shooting and figure out the logistics. I was doing all production alone so we could shift gears fast and improvise. But for sure there were many stressful moments. We started by driving down to Provence without anything planned, then the car

broke down going up a hill as darkness approached. I took a walk to consider if this film was a good idea after all. That is when I discovered the lavender field in the opening scene and ran back to get everyone ready. We had less than one hour of daylight left and then suddenly the film was happening.



**Eventually, the characters become caught in a snow storm while heading to the heights of the glacier.
Could you tell us more about the shooting of those scenes?**

Since I was also the producer of the film I had to walk a fine line between what I dreamed of as a director and what was safe. For the high altitude scenes I called on my old friend Asmus who is a local guide in Chamonix and told him to make all decisions regarding safety so I was free to work. We were based out of a refuge on the Italian side of Mont Blanc when a snow storm hit us hard in the middle of summer. At nearly 4000 meters this is not unusual but it was cold as hell and we could only add layers under the costumes. I warmed Antony's hands under my arms between takes and everything felt very fragile and beautiful. No one in the crew or cast had experienced to be in this kind of environment or conditions ever except Asmus and myself. In the end we kept shooting until midnight the final scenes with Antony on the glacier. The next morning we woke up at 4 am to a crystal clear day with frosted peaks that was somehow the perfect beginning to the sequence. I am very grateful for the luck we had and that we were ready to seize the moment. None of this would have been possible on a netflix show.

The film was made without external funding. Could you tell us more about the production of the film?

I did not budget since there was nothing to budget from. The props are bought on ebay and local markets. I flew the actors in on points and signed up for as many credit cards as I could. To save on accommodation I slept in a tent in the woods during the shooting and did as many functions on set as possible. But we had great times, drank a healthy amount of wine and met the local people who saw us walking home every night through town in 18th century costumes thinking that most likely we needed help.





DIRECTORS BIO

Jacobi comes from a background in mountaineering and long expeditions into the Arctic and Amazon. He worked as a high altitude cameraman before launching his own expeditions to remote mountain ranges concluding in a 2.500 km long traverse of the North Coast of Greenland. Later he studied Cinematography at the Danish Film School and began to make films with scientists and artists studying our relationship to nature. This theme is now continued in the form of fiction with a series of feature projects in development based on his own experiences in the wilderness. His first film "The Trouble With Nature" is made in the restless spirit of the romantic era and shot with just 2 actors in remote regions of the Alps.