

PORTRAIT OF A LADY ON FIRE (2019)

SAFE (1995)

PERSONA (1966)

A woman with long dark hair is shown in profile, sitting on a wooden floor in a dark, smoky room. She is lighting a cigarette with a lighter. The room is dimly lit, with a single candle visible in the background. The overall atmosphere is moody and cinematic.

# Wasteland

ISSUE #1

APRIL 2020

PERSONA IS A  
 KNOWLEDGE, A  
 TERRIBLE  
 KNOWLEDGE... ABOUT  
 LONELINESS, OUR  
 ESTRANGEMENT, OUR  
 INABILITY TO REACH  
 ONE ANOTHER...

While undertaking the care of the seemingly healthy, albeit mute, actress, Elisabet Vogler (Liv Ullmann), Nurse Alma (Bibi Andersson) begins to confess her past, that which presses at the surface of her mind with urgent volatility.

Together, as they occupy a remote island, seclusion begins to carve out the caves of Alma's consciousness, and while she begins to share her most repressed secrets with Elisabet, the tunnels and caverns of their psyches begin to converge into one fluid persona.

What Bergman allows us to realise about ourselves is that our stories are always entangled, always estranged from our ability to express them. In *Persona*, outsiders are shells of our own memory and identity, reflective and glistening hollow surfaces. These surfaces, obscured though they may be, such as the silent presence of Elisabet, pulls Alma in, lulling her into an ambiguous sense of security and connection. *Persona* is certainly Bergman's magnum opus; it demonstrates the restraints of dialogue and ultimately how the violences of our innermost disturbances do, somehow, inevitably emerge under the gaze of the stranger who stands before us.





ARE YOU



ALLERGIC  
THE 20TH



TO  
CENTURY?



Safe

(1995)

*Safe* is existence wrapped in lacerated plastic film, laying bare the grit which cuts through its surface. Its dystopia, or hyper-reality, is situated within a comprehension of the AIDS crisis of the 80s, yet its blend of recycled self-help doctrines and their high exposure certainly pervade our current consciousness. It seems then that now, over two decades after the film's release, more so than ever, is an appropriate time to revisit this masterwork of social disconnect and anxiety.

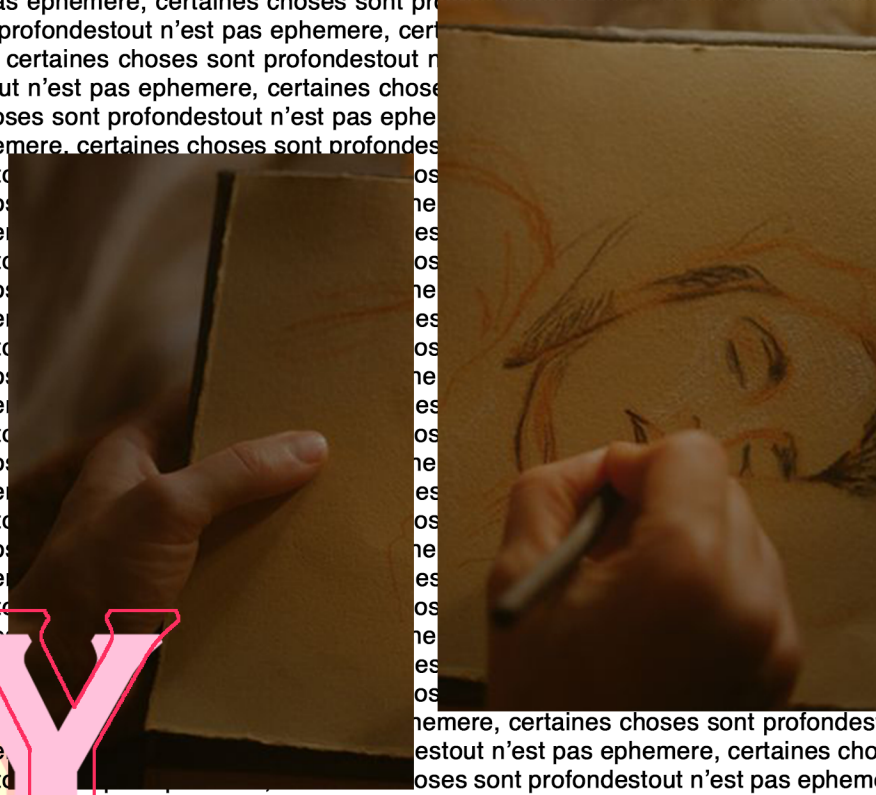
Suburban housewife Carol White is a vessel for modernity's nefarious efficacy to inebriate and consume its inhabitants, to lull them into a state of immunisation to their identity and desires. It is between her own experience of her body and others around her, who detachedly affirm her wellness, wherein Carol is forced to retract further into the core of her undiagnosed environmental illness. Much like Bergman's *Persona*, with the blurring of physical and mental illness woven into its fabric, *Safe* tunnels out disparate albeit connective criticism of the ineptitude of how sick bodies, as objects of modernity, are viewed, primarily by men. Processes of looking become aspects of confrontation, and Carol's inarticulacy renders language as inept self-expression.

Through its glacial suspense, *Safe* reworks the male gaze which fails to see the feminine body as it is. Julianne Moore, indexically registered autonomous by the directness of her fourth wall break, pointedly reclaims self-ownership in her wordless restraint. Her gaze, hard and cold, reclaims the confrontational dismissal of her illness.

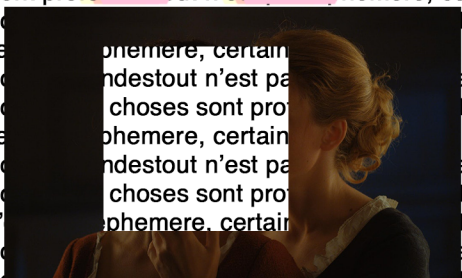
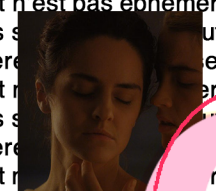
*Safe* is a quietly brilliant example of cinema which is entirely aware of its form. It is mischievous with its build of tension and potentiality for metaphor, that which is deliberately complicated by Julianne Moore's performance. Loaded with conflicting layers of meaning and depth, Moore re-empowers the object, the sick and misunderstood body, and turns towards affect in order to challenge her crowd of onlookers, us, who too are uncertain of and somewhat mesmerised by Carol's condition.

“blurring of physical and mental illness woven into its fabric”

# POOR BRAINLADY



# OFFLINE



# NOT EVERYTHING IS FLEETING, SOME THINGS ARE DEEP

Céline Sciamma's haunting, sensuous drama is at once alluring and inviting yet simultaneously feels entirely intrusive to watch; it is transcendent yet bound to a specific temporality, it is ephemeral yet mightily enduring. Artist and teacher Marianne (Noémie Merlant) is commissioned to paint the transactional wedding portrait of Héloïse (Adèle Haenel), though this rather clinical process fractures into far more intimate encounters, and the narrative evolves into an extraordinary study of desire, choice and attachment. *Portrait* negotiates the relationship between the observer and the observed; the artist and their muse; the object of desire and their onlooker; that which we urge ourselves to remember and that which must disintegrate in memory. What is most intricate and bewildering, aside from its visual splendour, is that mutuality seems at the heart of *Portrait*. It rebels against the masculine artist; the camera's gaze is continually averted between expansive exteriors, delicate sketching, forbidden glances, and soft caressing bodies beneath candlelight; all on the terms of the director as a queer woman. Ideas of tethering and fleeting, of choice and fate, exist in fraught alternation, and the delicacy and graduality of the love between artist and subject spills outward all at once, like a painting emerging out of water. The ebb and flow of the film is indescribably feminine, and its end result is breathtaking. As the credits begin to roll, one questions whether what they have just seen was imagined or real, dreamt of or thought of, which seems to rather quietly and devastatingly capture the essence of the love between Marianne and Héloïse.





**ARTWORK BY LYDIA GOODING**

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ARTWORK BY LYDIA GOODING  
DESIGNED BY CHARLOTTE MANSFIELD**