

“The Monkey house” – Director’s Statement

Psychologist Ernest Becker writes in his Seminal “The Denial of Death” that “Human civilization is ultimately an elaborate, symbolic mechanism against the knowledge of our mortality”.

In this regard, it is clear that we all have a strong desire to have our life count and have some sort of meaning. The thought that we all are merely a speck of dust that is here today and gone tomorrow is simply unacceptable to us, and therefore we each strive to have our mark.

Those of us who dabble in the creative arts would seem to have a slight advantage in this regard. A successful novel, play, poem, painting, symphony, is immediately linked to its creator and thus can easily make immortality accessible.

The catch, of course, is the word “successful”. To quote the old Chinese proverb: If a tree fell in the forest and no one heard it fall, has it really fallen? In order to make a mark – to achieve immortality – some degree of success must be achieved. But success tends to pass swiftly, unless some extraordinary gesture or event plants it in the collective memory forever.

This is the very subject matter of “The Monkey House” – a bemused black comedy on one man’s extraordinary effort to create a legacy. We live in an age where celebrity is just about the highest achievement one can reach for – sustaining this status throughout time would seem to be the ultimate 21st century goal.

As our story is based on fact. The irony of the matter is that the novelist who has been the inspiration to the screenplay has achieved immortality, but not quite the sort of immortality he has hoped for.

His story would seem to offer a very unusual perspective for this post truth era and its trappings.

Is this film reflexive? To some extent, I always tell people that my films are very personal but never a depiction of my own life, but rather a depiction of my own fears. So, when I wrote this comedy, was I worried about my own legacy? About my actual fascination with the notion of “Legacy”? My obsessive “alternative facts” dilemma? My very own denial of death? Most probably, yes I am.