

(The director)

Influences

As the numerous pictures that illustrate the book show, the visual world of Christophe Gans is a big field of quotations and souvenirs of the cinema which he recycles in a very specific universe. Even if the two films are totally different, the Drowned (title of his segment in Necronomicon) and Crying Freeman are definitely made in the same style. Christophe Gans: I could say that I try to use all tricks, classic (decoration, music, costumes) or modern (editing, camera movements) to bring the situation to a fantasy dimension. A personal approach, which the director has developed during the years, dedicated to exercise as a critic. Gans: All the French directors who began as journalist are filmmakers and film lovers. That is a very unique tradition in the world. In the USA, it's better to know nothing about the history of cinema. Why caring about a knowledge that has nothing to do with the charts of MTC and the culture of the teenagers in general. In my case, to harmonize genres and filmmakers who have illustrated these is an essential gift of my inspiration. I could not have created a film of phantoms like "the Drowned" without thinking of Roger Corman, Terence Fischer, Mario Bava or tried neo polar films without thinking of Jean-Pierre Melville or John Woo. My whole interest consists of transferring these references whilst investing my feeling and avoiding to make a plan which I do not feel in my bones. Taking place in a manor house of New England (The Drowned), in Shanghai on the Island of Hokkaido (Crying Freeman), his films are above all travels in the memory of the cinema. Gans: Crying Freeman was shoot completely in the same area: Vancouver and its surroundings. As I could not bring my camera to Asia where the action took place, I decided to let the viewer travel through the atmospheres of cinema. In Crying Freeman the visual style of the scene changes according to the countries where they just take place. The sequences of the gathering of the Dragons which takes place in China imitates the photographic style of Hongkong movies: the source of light is in the focus of the scene, the color is of monochrome blue, with the help of a very common device, a wide angle objective, like in the films of Tsui Hark. But as the story takes place again in a forest in Japan, the general tone gets dominated by green, the big scope and the melancholic atmosphere of the

Samurai films of the 60th, which I think are the best filmed in the history of cinema in color. The director especially tries to draw a line between reference and exploitation. "When John Carpenter has inherited of Howard Hawks, when Stephen Frears or the brother Coen are doing variations on Frank Capra's work, when De Palma revisits Hitchcock all that appears normal to me. I am definitely more restrained when I find complete sequences copied shot after shot, with the same cuts. Taking advantages of influences should not be made by just stealing. If you should follow the lesson of another .cinéaste, it's on the plateau and not during the production of the story-board. The influences should be a natural process and if possible unconscious. You should arrive on the shooting with no preconceived ideas or influences. That happened when I saw that superb astrologic mosaic on the floor, I had the idea of shooting the complete scene of the kidnapping of Yo from a crane, with high angle shot. But it is only during of the projection of the rushes that I found out the scene very much resembles to Dario Argento's work. This reference came up by the force of the circumstances. I did not have the mosaic made, it was just there. Crying Freeman has in his visual appearance two major inspiration sources. The one is indisputable Latin. Gans: Even if I shot in English, in Canada, with numerous American Actors, Crying Freeman has indeed little resemblance to the American Cinema. The room of Emu where the curtains swing, Lady Hanada in a white trench-coat smoking a cigarette in the undergrowth, this big colonnade- style house with long halls whose walls are painted in trompe-l'oeil, the shadows of gangsters sneaking around in the dark rainy night ... all that comes from my love for the European cinema of the sixties which determined this sophisticated and ambiguous atmosphere." The other big visual "Signature" of the film is surely Asian and first borrowed from John Woo, the cinéast of Hongkong. Gans: The Killer had been my biggest cinematographic shock of the last years. That's a film with which I have a passionate relationship. Something you should have with a woman rather than with an object. There are really many other films I think that are better than this one, but none has fascinated me like that. Love, to much love, finally hurts. I found myself trying to solve that problem. I admit I have made Crying Freeman for this reason, to explain in my way what upset me whenever I saw this film. I think that's exactly for the same reasons why

John Woo made the Killer, his favorite film thus honoring Samurai by Melville. We are all - in a moment of our life - the bashful lovers of a film. There is no other way to explain why people have been caught by cinema for a whole century now. I totally claim my affiliation to John Woo, even if I put it on a level that exceeds the simple preference of choreographic fusillades. His work from Hongkong is the expression of a sensitivity cinema which I admire for its lyricism, its romanticism. It's a cinema that still believes in its themes. With Woo, I rediscovered that it is possible to make films that deal with great feelings, love, honor. I love his sense of the chivalry. It's a precious feeling, which he unfortunately seems to have denied in his 2 American films. And Gans sums up: It is essential that we sweep the cynicism which dominated the 80th to give a new innocence, a new purity to popular cinema. Here John Woo has shown us the way