# Movie Review: Desecration

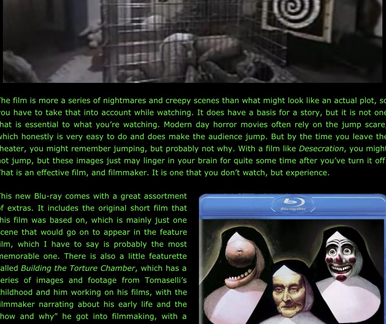
August 19, 2018 by Jon Kitley in Reviews: Movies and tagged Christie Sandford, Code Red, Danny Lopes, Dante Tomaselli, Desecration

*Desecration* (1999)
Directed by Dante Tomaselli
Starring Irma St. Paule, Christie Sandford, Danny Lopes, Salvatore Paul Piro, Vincent Lamberti.

"My films are really about peeling back the layers of pain and guilt buried in the unconscious mind."

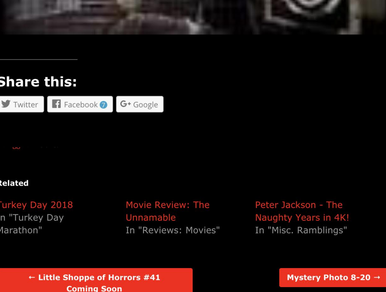
That above quote really captures the work of filmmaker Tomaselli. He is one craftsman that really is creating from his mind, heart, and soul, and I think that really shows in his work. I can remember reviewing this film when it first came out two decades ago and was impressed with what he was showing us. Now with the 20th Anniversary Blu-ray getting a release from Code Red, what better time to take a trip down memory lane than now, right? Has my thoughts on this changed over the years? Has it gotten better, or worse over time? Read on to find out.

What I remember from this film upon my initial viewing had the exact same effect this time around, which is Tomaselli's incredible use of imagery. His visual style is definitely that of the European feel and not something that is typical of American filmmakers. And for that, I applaud him to no end. If you go into this film expecting a typical front to back story, all wrapped up in a bow at the end, then you will be disappointed. But if you go into it with an open mind, you will experience some amazingly dark and twisted imagery, with an unsettling sequence of events. When you add in the fact that the budget was only $150,000,it makes it even more impressive.



The story starts off with an old woman discovering her daughter who had passed away, right in front of her young boy in his play pen. Flash forward several years and we see a young woman going through the ceremony to become a nun, but for some bizarre reason, the candle she is carrying won't light. The sequence alone is pretty effective, mainly due to the look of confusion and terror that comes across the face of the nun, played incredibly by Christie Sandford. She leaves the church a little dazed and confused, and as she wanders outside she is killed in a freak accident with a motorized toy airplane, flown by a young boy from the Catholic school that the church is part of. We soon find out, the boy is the same one from the beginning with the dead mother. That is when things start to get *really* weird!

This dead nun starts to show up near the church causing havoc, as well as in the dreams of this young boy who was flying the plane. It doesn't make things any easier to figure out when Sandford is playing both the strange nun as well as the boy's dead mother. There are certain sequences and images we see that are highly effective, and very demented. Such as a dream where the boy, teenage Bobby, is in something like a dog cage, in a diaper, with his mother squirting milk from a baby's bottle at him, while there are some pretty twisted clowns and toys looming over him. It's enough to give anyone nightmares, especially if you have a thing about toys. This particular scene is what the original short film of the same name Tomaselli made back in 1996. Other scenes include more with the bloody nun, a symbolic puzzle, an attack by scissors, and much more.



The film is more a series of nightmares and creepy scenes than what might look like an actual plot, so you have to take that into account while watching. It does have a basis for a story, but it is not one that is essential to what you're watching. Modern day horror movies often rely on the jump scare, which honestly is very easy to do and does make the audience jump. But by the time you leave the theater, you might remember jumping, but probably not why. With a film like *Desecration*, you might not jump, but these images just may linger in your brain for quite some time after you've turn it off. That is an effective film, and filmmaker. It is one that you don't watch, but experience.




This new Blu-ray comes with a great assortment of extras. It includes the original short film that this film was based on, which is mainly just one scene that would go on to appear in the feature film, which I have to say is probably the most memorable one. There is also a little featurette called *Building the Torture Chamber*, which has a series of images and footage from Tomaselli's childhood and him working on his films, with the filmmaker narrating about his early life and the "how and why" he got into filmmaking, with a pretty good explanation as to why his films look and feel the way they do. Very insightful.

There is also the audio commentary by Tomaselli, that while there are gaps in the commentary here and there, you can tell how personal this film is and that what you're seeing on screen has come from this person's soul. He goes into a lot of detail on not only where these images and memories came from, but also the people that worked on the movie.

I think if you are looking for a very different kind of filmmaker, one that wants to dabble in imagery and sound that will capture your attention than a simple story and characters, then I think you should look into the work of Dante Tomaselli. He will show you things that you've probably not seen before but ones that will stick in your brain. Just check out the trailer below to see what I'm talking about.

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October 2018 (18)
September 2018 (21)
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June 2018 (21)
May 2018 (21)
April 2018 (24)
March 2018 (24)
February 2018 (25)
January 2018 (20)
December 2017 (15)
November 2017 (17)
October 2017 (26)
September 2017 (17)
August 2017 (16)
July 2017 (28)
June 2017 (19)
May 2017 (19)
April 2017 (24)
March 2017 (26)
February 2017 (22)
January 2017 (31)
December 2016 (20)
November 2016 (31)
October 2016 (21)
September 2016 (19)
August 2016 (25)
July 2016 (25)
June 2016 (29)
May 2016 (32)
April 2016 (31)
March 2016 (31)
February 2016 (34)
January 2016 (27)
December 2015 (33)
November 2015 (30)
October 2015 (19)
September 2015 (15)
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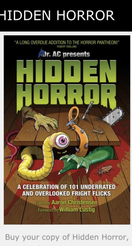


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