

Oliver Hermanus: A Bold Voice in Contemporary South African Cinema

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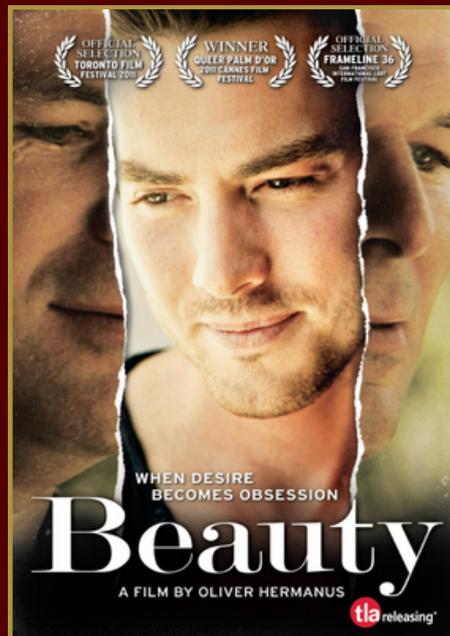


Oliver Hermanus

Source: IMDb



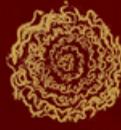
Oliver Hermanus is a South African filmmaker who has garnered international attention for his innovative storytelling. He has directed films such as *Scoonheid* (2011), *Moffie* (2019), and *The Endless River* (2015), *Living* (2022). Hermanus emerges as a bold voice in contemporary South African cinema by tackling complex subjects with a visually captivating style.



A poster of the film, *Scoonheid* (*Beauty*)

Source: IMDb

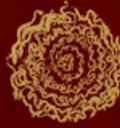
Oliver Hermanus's strength lies in his nuanced exploration of complex themes, often addressing issues of identity, societal norms, and personal struggles. Take the 2011 film *Scoonheid* (*Beauty*) as an example. Francois van Heerden, the protagonist of the film, is a middle-aged man who struggles with his hidden homosexuality in a conservative society. At the same time, his openly racist and homophobic behavior creates an internal layer of questions among the audience. By portraying a homosexual character as a homophobic person, the film critiques the toxic masculinity and homophobia that are deeply ingrained in South African society, reflecting the struggles between internal feelings and societal expectations.



Shots from the film, *Moffie*

Source: IMDb

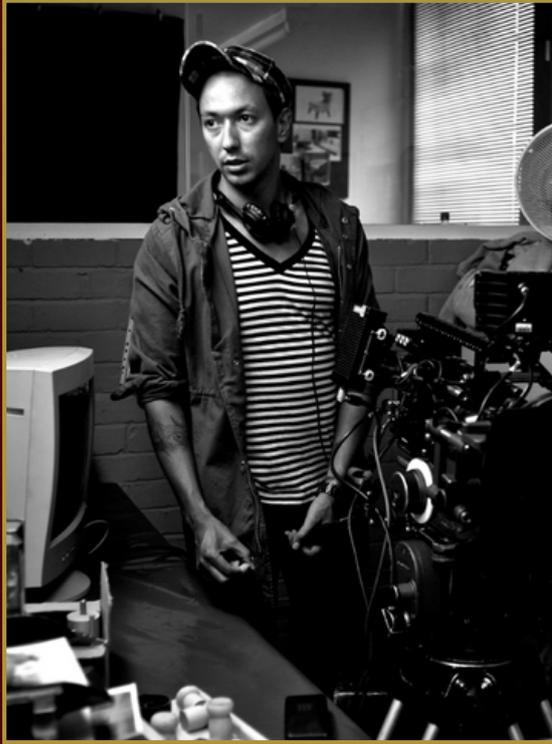
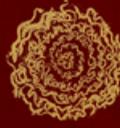
Hermanus tries to educate viewers about the harsh past of South Africa, and the 2019 film *Moffie* serves as an example. The protagonist, Nicholas, is a gay character in a situation where he must complete two years of compulsory military service, where being gay is violently suppressed. The suppression faced by Black South Africans during the Apartheid era is well-known to many. However, the white protagonist in the film faces suppression too. Through this character, Oliver Hermanus crafts a narrative that reveals issues of repression from the Apartheid era beyond racial discrimination.



Shots from the film, *The Endless River*

Source: IMDb

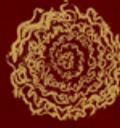
The 2015 film *The Endless River* explored the complexities of interracial relationships in post-apartheid South Africa. The film captured rural South Africa as a character in itself, taking viewers to the country's beauty. *The Endless River* became the first South African film to compete for the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival. The representation of Hermanus's films at various international film festivals like Venice and Cannes opened up new audiences for South African cinema.



Oliver Hermanus

Source: IMDb

Oliver Hermanus excels not only in selecting complex themes but also in creating a visual language that resonates with those themes. He beautifully uses long takes, allowing the audience to slowly immerse themselves in the characters' emotions and universe. His use of real-world locations and natural lighting acts as a catalyst in the film's realism. The proper blend of visual language with complex themes makes Oliver Hermanus a bold voice in contemporary South African cinema.



References:

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