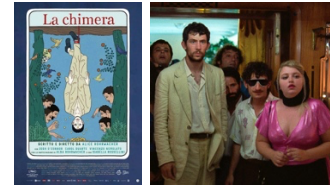


REVIEW

Review of Alice Rohrwacher's *La Chimera*: "One Foot in the Grave"

2023, Tempesta/Rai Cinema/Ad Vitam, 133 min

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For those enamored with cinema's ability to excavate the past while gazing into the future, Alice Rohrwacher's *La Chimera* offers a rare, multi-layered treasure. Following her critically acclaimed *Happy as Lazzaro* (2018), Rohrwacher continues to cement her reputation as a filmmaker who brings both mythic resonance and tangible intimacy to her storytelling. *La Chimera* transcends the limits of linear narrative, offering instead a dreamlike journey through the labyrinth of the past, morality, and personal redemption.

The film follows Arthur (Josh O'Connor), a sharply dressed former archeologist turned *tombarolo* (tomb raider), in a performance that is restrained yet evocative, embodying a man caught between the allure of ancient treasures and the shadows of his personal grief. At the heart of *La Chimera* lies Arthur's search – not only for buried relics but also for a sense of meaning after personal tragedy. His memories of a lost love, Beniamina, filter through the film like ghostly whispers, lending a melancholic undercurrent to his interactions with both the living and the dead. Rohrwacher masterfully weaves these threads of grief, memory, and obsession into a tapestry that feels both timeless and urgent.

The supporting cast enriches the story, with Isabella Rossellini as a dignified yet eccentric noblewoman and Carol Duarte offering a grounded foil to Arthur's haunted demeanor. These characters, like the film itself, straddle the line between the ordinary and the extraordinary, rooting the narrative in human relationships even as it reaches for higher philosophical themes.

The Italian countryside, rendered in breathtaking detail by cinematographer Hélène Louvart, becomes a character in its own right – a setting as layered and enigmatic as the relics buried beneath it. The interplay between the beauty of the landscape and the moral ambiguity of Arthur's work is a recurring visual and thematic motif.

La Chimera is a rare film that defies categorization. It is at once a mystery, a romance, and a deeply spiritual journey. The title itself invites interpretations – a *chimera* being at once a mythical creature, a dream, and/or something perpetually out of reach. For Arthur, the chimera is many things: the artifacts he excavates, the memory of Beniamina, and the elusive sense of belonging he seeks in a world where his identity is fractured. Rohrwacher's direction ensures that the film never lingers too long in one register; moments of humor and humanity balance the melancholy, making the experience as layered as the treasures Arthur uncovers. The film encourages viewers to reflect on their own chimeras – those intangible pursuits that define, and sometimes consume, us. For those willing to dig deep, this is a journey worth taking, a reminder that sometimes the treasures we seek are not in the ground, but within ourselves.