

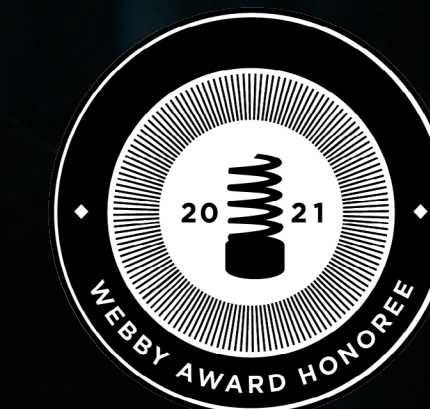


*"A METICULOUSLY CRAFTED, SURPRISING
MINI-STORY FULL OF NUANCE AND AMBIGUITY."*

JENNY BOULDEN, AWARDS DAILY

AN OCCURRENCE AT ARVERNE

*A FILM BY ROBERT BROADHURST
PRODUCED BY CHARLES HAYES IV & ROBERT BROADHURST*



SHORT OF THE WEEK

CURTISS COOK, JR.

AN OCCURRENCE AT ARVERNE

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY ROBERT BROADHURST
PRODUCED BY CHARLES HAYES IV & ROBERT BROADHURST

RUNNING TIME: 7 minutes 30 seconds
YEAR: 2020

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A MAN ARRIVES AT AN UNKNOWN HOME WITH AN UNKNOWN AGENDA.

AN OCCURRENCE AT ARVERNE follows an unknown man in his 20s attempting to gain access to an unknown home as a woman entering her car regards him warily. Once inside the home, his purpose is interrupted, rattling his nerves. As the ambiguity of his agenda sharpens into focus, wariness on the streets escalates.

This short film, the first narrative work by New York-based filmmaker Robert Broadhurst, suggests a modern-day riff on Ambrose Bierce's AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE as it involves the audience in the process of completing its action.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I wanted my first film as writer-director to scrutinize white privilege and white supremacy. I was sick of seeing white savior stories where Black characters only served to redeem white ones, reassuring white audiences and letting us off the hook without challenging any assumptions. No matter how artfully these films were made, no matter how well acted, they always perpetuated the delusion that things were basically okay except for a few bad apples - instead of going anywhere near the visceral truth of racial bias or structural white supremacy.

I wanted to make a tense Rorschach of a film by nixing the usual white proxy character and putting interpretive responsibility directly with viewers. I wanted to experiment, to see if I could tease out racial bias in a compact runtime using a short film's unique capacity for dramatic reversals, where the reversal happened in the viewer's mind instead of through plot or character. I knew this approach would risk provoking a range of reactions based on each viewer's type and level of bias and how strong the need was for traditional storytelling. Some might discover their bias, feel the consequences, and experience a powerful film. Others might find the story to be a tragic or even tedious statement of the obvious. The timing of when the film would be seen, and where culture would be in that moment, would also play a big role in its reception.

This approach came with nuts and bolts filmmaking challenges. Could I tell a tense and compelling story with a single character talking on the phone doing such a banal activity? Could I get audiences to invest in his fate over

so few real-time minutes? I knew a third-person camera was needed to avoid manipulating the audience to root for or against the protagonist, but with just one actor could I pull off the storytelling without the safety net of coverage? If a shot or the actor's performance didn't work, I wouldn't have any editorial advantages. Inserts wouldn't be motivated, and I couldn't fall back on shots of other characters. Using the protagonist's POV would violate the established rules of subjectivity. Likewise, fancy, expressive shots were off the table. I would need to be extra vigilant to achieve the level of accuracy and restraint the story required, just to get the experiment to the point where it merely *might* work. It would have to be simple to achieve a complex result.

Finally, I knew an explicit, conclusive ending would only feed white fetishization of Black trauma while adding to the onslaught of trauma endured by Black people every day - but would a more nuanced finale effectively challenge and satisfy the audience?

AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE, the Ambrose Bierce short story and film adaptation from which my film takes its name, forced readers to critique their reading of narrative events - could my film do the same?

I needed to find out.

- ROBERT BROADHURST

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

Upon reading the script for AN OCCURRENCE AT ARVERNE, I experienced a multitude of thoughts and feelings. I said to myself, "Okay, here's a story that captures a small piece of what it feels like to be a Black man in America. Here's a story that takes a stab at turning the white gaze on itself." I thought it was conceptually daring and emotionally powerful but I kept second-guessing whether or not it was my story to tell, simply because the story wasn't necessarily for my people. As a Black man in America, the idea of taking precautions and being hypervigilant of my surroundings isn't new to me. It's how I live my life, and while I do not let it hinder the joy in my heart, it truly is how I live my life - never wanting to be assumed that I'm something or someone I'm not - never wanting a stereotype to be my only spotlight. So, while this story felt near and dear to my existence, it still didn't necessarily feel like it was for me.

Thankfully, after an extensive conversation with Robert (writer-director), I realized it wasn't. His intention wasn't to shed light on the plight of Black men for Black people, but instead to bring awareness to the white audience of the biases they might not even be aware they possess. And that's precisely what this film does.

We learn at an early age that there are two sides to every story, and somewhere in the middle, we find the truth, and the same rings true for the account of race in this country. There's the Black perspective, and there's the white perspective. Some might even take it further to say there's the victim's point of view and the oppressor's point of view, and what I've come to realize is that it can be difficult to change someone's opinion if you don't share the same perspective. This phenomenon is evident in the very current and literal race war that is 2020. In laymen's terms, Black people want white people to digest our perspective and be moved enough

to incite change on their side of the fence, but a victim appealing to their oppressor very rarely inspires lasting change. Because while some may hear, digest, and change, others might display momentary sympathy and then continue living their lives as they were before.

I chose to stand behind this film because it is Robert's appeal to his people. I've grown up seeing and hearing about the call to action from Black people to white people, but I've rarely seen white people inciting a call to action for each other on behalf of Black people. History has proven that it's not enough for me as a Black man to tell a white person, "Care about me. My life matters." We need allies and accomplices on the other side of this proverbial fence to speak up with us to bring about permanent change.

This film is quick and requires your undivided attention. This film is real, and it will make a lot of people uncomfortable. But more importantly, this film is a step in the right direction. We knew the intention behind it when we filmed it in March 2019, but we could not have known that its release a year later would come about during such a pivotal moment in our country's history. Initially, we just wanted to push the envelope, but the envelope is wide open now, and we want to keep it that way. I hope this film will inspire some much-needed conversations and allow people to step away from old mindsets and standards that hinder us from a brighter, more peaceful future.

This film was a labor of love, and it's up to you, the viewer, to determine how much impact it has on your life and the lives of others.

- CHARLES HAYES IV



BIOGRAPHIES

CAST

MARCUS | **CURTISS COOK, JR.**

Curtiss is a Harlem school of the arts graduate, who starred in Sundance hit 'Gook,' Ryan Koo's 'Amateur' and Jay Dockendorf's 'Naz & Maalik' as well as Christopher Morris's 'The Day Shall Come.' A versatile and passionate actor, he made his regional theater debut in 'Brownsville Song' for The Long Wharf Theater and The Philadelphia Theater Company. Following this success, Curtiss made his Off-Broadway debut in the Classic Stage Company's production of 'Mother Courage' and 'Her Children' and most recently 'Parable of The Sower,' which debuted at New York's Public Theater. On television, his credits include 'Power,' 'Bull,' 'The Path,' 'Orange is the New Black' and most recently in NBC's 'Manifest.'

CREW

WRITER DIRECTOR PRODUCER EDITOR | **ROBERT BROADHURST**

Robert is an east coast suburb-raised, Brooklyn-based filmmaker. He earned his MFA in filmmaking from Columbia University where the short films he wrote, produced, and/or edited played festivals from Tribeca to TIFF. After film school he worked as an editor in formats from commercials to trailers to fashion to broadcast docudramas. Following his work on Kanye West's first three Yeezy fashion launches, he made the move to directing with campaign films for Adidas Y-3, Alexander Wang, and Armani Beauty among others. He returned to narrative filmmaking with AN OCCURRENCE AT ARVERNE, his first short film as writer and director. robertdirects.com

PRODUCER | **CHARLES HAYES IV**

Charles is an NYC film and theater producer whose credits include projects for HBO, Warner Bros., CBS, Scott Rudin Productions, ABC, Marvel, Netflix, Showtime, Food Network, GQ, and various independent stage productions and Broadway & Off-Broadway theatrical productions. With a B.S. in Biology from Morehouse College and extensive production experience, Charles' unshakeable faith in the empowering message of any story is paramount for this rising filmmaker.

CINEMATOGRAPHER | **FRANK APOLLONIO**

With a strong base in still photography, Frank spent ten years in Philadelphia learning his craft on set in a range of roles on commercials and features before moving to New York in 2016. He has since proven his mettle in the world of commercial cinematography shooting for brands including Adidas, Alexander Wang, Facebook, Peloton, Todd Snyder, and Vogue. AN OCCURRENCE AT ARVERNE is his first narrative film. frankapollonio.com

PRODUCTION DESIGNER | **ELSA RINDE**

Elsa Rinde has an MFA in scenic design from the Yale School of Drama. Yale credits include Shakespeare's As You Like It and Othello; Yale Cabaret credits include Alma, Red Speedo, The Swallow and the Tomcat and Latinos Who Look Like Ricky Martin. She holds a B.A. in theater with a minor in Philosophy from Barnard College, where she designed the set and projections for Hamletmachine, and the sets for The Maids, Top Girls, and The Long Goodbye. She directed and designed the web series Tabs, and has art-directed several shorts including Jack and Jill and Candace. She has worked as an art department assistant and clearance coordinator on multiple television shows including The Deuce (HBO), The Sinner (NBCU), Gotham (WB), and Elementary (CBS). She designed the east coast premiere production of Testmatch at Yale Rep, which was canceled due to COVID-19, and is a 2020 recipient of the Donald and Zorka Oenslager Fellowship Award in Design. elsarinde.com



CREDITS

Marcus	CURTISS COOK, JR.	Color	MIKEY ROSSITER
		Sound Design & Mix	BRIAN GOODHEART
Karen	VIKA DOVE		
Rita (Photo)	MICKALIA FORRESTER-EWEN	1st Assistant Director	MATTHEAU O'BRIEN
		Script Supervisor	CHARLOTTE MANNING
		Sound Recording	ANTHONY THOMPSON
Writer & Director	ROBERT BROADHURST	Gaffers	FOREST ERWIN, MOE LARENA
Producers	CHARLES HAYES IV ROBERT BROADHURST	Assistant Camera	KATHRYN OWL
Cinematographer	FRANK APOLLONIO	Production Assistants	ENRIQUE CABA MICHELLE DEME MARIA-LUIZA MULLER MATTHEW O'CONNOR JON SICHERMAN
Production Designer	ELSA RINDE		
		Set Photography	ANNASTASIYA SERGIENYA





BEHIND THE SCENES

SET PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANASTASIYA SERGIENYA

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