

## A Fiennes Family Affair

### Martha Fiennes talks about her new feature film, *Chromophobia* during the Foyle Film Festival

*Film director Martha Fiennes attended the Foyle Film festival (November 2005) to talk about her feature film, Chromophobia. Children's Express reporters caught up with her at the Tower Hotel where she was hosting a workshop.*

Martha was a successful commercials and music video director when she directed her first feature film, *Onegin*, six years ago, which won several awards. The film stars her brother Ralph, who is most famous in his own right for starring in such films as *The End of the Affair* and *Schindler's List*.

Her latest project, *Chromophobia*, again marked a collaboration with her brother, as well as performances from Kristin Scott Thomas, Penelope Cruz, Ben Chaplin and Rhys Ifans.

She first explained why she decided to embark on a career in film. 'My dad was a photographer and I used to do a lot of printing for him. I always took pictures from an early age. He had a camera and a dark room and I used to work in there, but I always knew that it wasn't enough. One still image that was silent wasn't enough for me.'

Martha believes the biggest challenge any fledgling filmmaker faces is raising the necessary finance. 'There are a lot of difficult aspects. Its not creative, its not ideas, its not working with actors, set designers, hair, make-up, editing, choosing music. For me they are all so much pleasure. For me the most difficult aspect has been the politics, trying to raise the finance, the way you are treated in the raising of finance, the struggle and the persistence.'

She is also wary of the trap many filmmakers fall into, where they take on projects simply on a financial basis. 'For me I have to really love it, the actors have to be right. My ambition is that I achieve what I should be doing and not jumping on to something for the wrong reasons.'

Martha feels strongly that practical learning is the direction for young people to take if they want to be a filmmaker. 'Don't be afraid, there is nothing to fear, borrow a camera or sit down with a pencil and paper, write a scene, however dumb or stupid you think it is. Do it yourself and read it back, pick up a camera, show it, find a way of editing, do it now!'

Despite *Chromophobia* being chosen to close the Cannes Film festival in May 2005, she is constantly cautious of letting praise go to her head. 'You have got to keep your feet on the ground because the thing that tells you that you are successful is all hype and media and that person is still a person who struggles with every other thing that any other person struggles with.'

One aspect of the artistic process, which fascinates Martha, is the criticism that filmmakers and actors face on a constant basis. Although she understands a critic's right to review a movie she has become somewhat amazed with the level of viciousness with which many now write.

'I wonder when a critic writes something really vicious are they any way connected? Do they think that people are so glamorous that they exist in another dimension because in my experience I have known many people who have been on the receiving end and it is as harsh as it can possibly be. You haven't created wars, you haven't been violent to children, you have just expressed yourself and they have a problem with you.'

She continues: 'Some criticism is so out of proportion. I have seen a review in the Guardian that suggested that someone should take a machine gun to Guy Ritchie. You think there are flaws in his movie but you are actually talking about physically destroying the man.'

So far Martha has enjoyed mostly positive reviews for her own work, but critics beware. Step on her toes and don't expect this director to take the criticism lying down!

### About the team

This story was produced by Joseph McDermott, 15, Sharmin Rahman, 14, Emma Arbuckle, 14 and Sharon McLaughlin, 16. It was published by [Culture Northern Ireland](#) website.

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