








FILM: **LA CHIMERA**

FDG RATING: 2.9     

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Alice Rohrwacher: *director*  
Josh O'Connor: *actor, Arthur*  
Carol Duarte: *actress, Italia*

DATE: September 22, 2024

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **LA CHIMERA**

Magical realism best describes the 2023 film, *La Chimera*, an intriguing story about Arthur, a melancholy English archeologist recently released from prison for being caught stealing Etruscan artifacts from tombs and then selling them to an art dealer named Spartaco. It's the 1980s, and he returns to the small rural town in Italy where, after visiting the elderly mother, Flora, of his lost love, Beniamina, he reluctantly reconnects with the rag-tag gang of *tombaroli* (tomb raiders) who had escaped the police when Arthur was caught. As Arthur is riding the train to his rural hometown, he has flashes of Beniamina, and their romantic relationship. It's a mystery what has happened to her. Later we learn that she had died but Arthur is repeatedly overcome by the memory of her.

We questioned the likelihood of these tombs being so easily raided but even as recent as 2023, archeologists have discovered buried artifacts and evidence that many treasures have been stolen. Arthur's innate ability to use a divining rod to locate the burial sites definitely added magical realism to the story.

When Arthur visits Flora, he meets her singing student, Italia, who is also the live-in maid and who has her two small children living with her, unbeknownst to Flora who is in a wheel chair which limits her ability to move around the small villa. Arthur and Italia eventually have a romantic relationship but during a later tomb raid, Italia does not approve of the gang tampering with precious antiquities so alerts the police. At one pivotal point, inside an especially richly crowded tomb, one of the *tombaroli* hacks off the head of a precious sculpture to be able to remove the sculpture through the tomb's small opening. This is significant since it clearly shows disregard for the history of the precious antiquities, however we see several scenes where Arthur emotionally admires the beauty of the archeological pieces. It all comes down to a pivotal point where they witness an auction led by Spartaco who is lying about the origins of the antiquities for sale and Arthur and his *tombaroli* show Spartaco the head of the sculpture, exposing all the lies about the antiquities for sale. Also of note, next to the tomb they discovered, is a large power plant, that is polluting the water.

The film is a fun lark, a fable, but what does it all mean? One discussion participant noted the theme of living in the past, in contrast with the young mother, Italia, who was completely in the present. In fact, when Flora kicks her out after discovering her children, Italia turns a dilapidated abandoned train station into "home" for her family and a few other single mothers. The past versus the present. The obsession with precious antiquities for their rich history versus their commercial value. The destruction of history for the sake of commercialism. An interesting parallel is Flora's daughters who are trying to convince Flora she would be happier in a care home, again showing the disregard for the value of the past.

Several discussion participants commented on the intriguing quirky characters. Maybe a little reminiscent of Fellini's colorful parades of characters so a possible nod to the great Italian film maker. Excellent performances. Good cinematography although not of the beautiful lush Italian countryside, but rather a dusty rural area. An enlightening peek into the richness and beauty of the Etruscan civilization.

There's also a mysterious red thread that we see Beniamina holding in an early dream flash back. The thread reappears at the end pulling Arthur from the present into the past and reuniting him with Beniamina.

One discussion participant called the film weird and difficult to piece together. Another liked the carefree magical spirit. A unique camera technique was when Arthur has a metaphysical connection with what is buried in ground below, the film frame flips upside down. A published critic described *La Chimera* as a dreamlike descent into a majestically tattered world right beneath our own.

Intriguing, especially the idea of grave robbers double crossing each other, good performances by the cast of characters, meaningful message about the importance of preserving the past versus sacrificing it for commercial gain, but *La Chimera* could only summon a fragmented 2.9 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!  
Adriane Dedic, [adedic@pacbell.net](mailto:adedic@pacbell.net)  
[www.filmdiscussiongroup.com](http://www.filmdiscussiongroup.com)