

# Under your skin: Marina de Van and the contemporary French *cinéma du corps*

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## Abstract

*This article explores the work of the French filmmaker Marina de Van, focusing on her debut feature Dans ma peau/In My Skin (2002), which deals with the issue of self-mutilation. The essay situates the film within the recent phenomenon of the cinéma du corps, whose agenda is an on-screen interrogation of physicality in stark yet intimate terms. Using personal interviews and trade discourses, it then charts the cultural, professional and institutional contexts to de Van's career, emphasizing her foundational experiences in film school. Finally, it analyses Dans ma peau's use of avant garde style, de Van's experimental techniques as a performer, and the film's array of social critiques.*

## Keywords

*Dans ma peau  
Marina de Van  
cinéma du corps  
performance  
film style*

Contemporary French cinema is today catalysing a new wave of controversy. In particular, a spate of recent French films that deal frankly and graphically with the body, and corporeal transgressions, has provoked an international scrutiny at times bordering on hysteria. The notorious *Baise-moi* (Trinh Thi and Despentès, 2000), *demonlover* (Assayas, 2002), *Intimité/Intimacy* (Chéreau, 2001), *Irréversible/Irreversible* (Noé, 2002), *Romance* (Breillat, 1999), *Regarde la mer/See the Sea* (Ozon, 1997), *Sombre* (Grandrieux, 1998), *Trouble Every Day* (Denis, 2001), and *Twentynine Palms* (Dumont, 2003) are leading examples of this cycle. They form the core of what I define as the *cinéma du corps*, whose agenda is an on-screen interrogation of physicality in brutally intimate terms. This *cinéma du corps* consists of arthouse thrillers with deliberately discomfiting features: dispassionate physical encounters involving filmed sex that is sometimes unsimulated; physical desire embodied by the performances of actors or non-professionals as harshly self-gratifying; the sex act itself depicted as fundamentally aggressive, devoid of romance or empathy of any kind; and social relationships that disintegrate in the face of such violent compulsions (Palmer 2006). Within global film culture, those filmmakers – or figureheads – associated with the *cinéma du corps* have either advanced drastically their reputations as cutting edge iconoclasts (Assayas, Breillat, Denis), or else become agit-prop auteurs seemingly overnight (Dumont, Noé, Grandrieux).

Responses to this strain of cinema have been predictably combative. First hand, there has been volatile audience feedback, evident notably in the mass walkouts that greeted *Trouble Every Day* and *Irréversible* at their Cannes premieres in 2001 and 2002, although similar fates met many of the cycle during festival screenings elsewhere. Open hostility has also motivated both popular and scholarly reviews of these films. Even when

select critics offer sympathy, or defenses, their comments, in publications as diverse as *Positif*, *Télérama*, *Sight and Sound* and *The Boston Globe*, have frequently appeared in print alongside dismissive, hence mitigating, counterreviews. Immediate rejection, indeed, remains the dominant reaction to films which, as Richard Falcon has argued, manifest ‘an aggressive desire to confront their audiences, to render the spectator’s experience problematic’ (Falcon 1999: 11). Simple, by consequence, to dismiss this *cinéma du corps* for its disturbing use of graphic physicality, but far harder to recognize its exacting stylistic ambitions, to gauge its status as a vigorous, conceptually dynamic new model of filmmaking. For as Olivier Joyard has suggested astutely in an essay in *Cahiers du cinéma*, at issue here is a group of filmmakers whose work ‘seeks to stake out the contemporary avant garde. Building from the image itself as raw material, noting the importance of colours and sound, using fragmentary storytelling... believing in cinema as a violent experience of the extreme’ (Joyard 2002: 11).

Echoing Joyard’s sentiments, to characterize this *cinéma du corps* more rigorously we must approach it objectively, on its own terms, identifying the experimental minutiae of its design that configure this formally assertive address to the spectator. On first viewing – or at a glance – these motifs of physical and/or sexual debasement are undeniably challenging. They are categorically not, however, the sole basis, or only interest, of this mode of cinema. Our entry point must be the analysis of the *cinéma du corps* as a type of avant-garde phenomenon. We need to explore how such filmmaking attenuates or strategically abandons narrative; how it conceives of acting and physical performance on-screen as the site of exposure and trauma; how it brilliantly radicalizes conventions of film style and how, crucially, it overhauls the role of the film viewer, rejecting the traditionally passive, entertained onlooker, to demand instead a viscerally engaged experiential participant. In essence, filmmakers like Denis, Noé, Dumont and their contemporaries, have engineered a profoundly empirical cinema. Retaining dramatic and character arcs only in vestigial traces, they prefer effects derived from an innovative composite of perceptual encounters, a raw and occasionally confrontational array of cinematic sensations.

To situate this *cinéma du corps* anew, my case study is the nascent career of Marina de Van. While I relate de Van’s activities to proximate currents in contemporary French cinema, my aim is also to define her projects as a distinctive oeuvre, a quite literal body of work. Besides her progress as writer, actress and director of short films, my focus here is on her debut feature, *Dans ma peau/In My Skin* (2002). My approach is both textual and contextual. It relies upon close scrutiny of the actual films, as well as concomitant, shaping factors within contemporary French film culture. I explore the influence of its leading institutions and figures, de Van’s own testimony from my personal interviews with her, as well as her spirited self-presentation in the trade press. This methodology produces a cluster of salient perspectives. If the *cinéma du corps* does indeed represent a form of contemporary avant garde, as I suggest, then how and why might a young filmmaker manage her career to make such divisive, provocative films? Reversing the equation, what artistic and professional opportunities does this contested filmmaking model actually create?



Figure 1: Esther (Marina de Van) and Vincent (Laurent Lucas) in *Dans ma peau*.

### From la Fémis to la frontière

Although the national French film school system is historically much maligned – derided by many icons, from the New Wave generation, to Theo Angelopoulos, to Christophe Gans – today it is a means for potentially rapid advancement, on- and off-screen. De Van's institutional encounters, in this light, proved professionally formative. After completing her baccalauréat with a literary emphasis, de Van briefly studied philosophy before applying to film school. In 1993, aged 22, she enrolled in l'École Nationale Supérieure des Métiers de l'Image et du Son (la Fémis), which since its creation in 1984 has replaced IDHEC as arguably France's most important film school. Housed at the site of the old Pathé studios on the rue Francoeur in Paris, la Fémis is mandated to provide technical, cultural and artistic training in the field of cinema and audio-visual media. The school is both selective in its admissions and demanding in its training; just over 600 students have graduated in its first twenty years, averaging around 30 per year, including such notables as Arnaud Desplechin and Noémie Lvovsky.

La Fémis is best thought of as the domain of the élite, where students practice basic techniques, but are also led to become innovators. It is, as a result, a source of filmmakers who are unfazed by the prospect of cinematic risk-taking. As René Prédal argues, students at la Fémis 'learn their craft, but above all are encouraged to create, to express themselves, to develop their style: it is a school of artists more than professionals, those prepared to join the exclusive club of auteur-directors and not become mere metteurs-en-scène' (Prédal 2002: 39). De Van's experience of la Fémis instilled in her belated creative direction, and in retrospect she considers its intensive yet inventive technical exercises, which culminate in six-month practical final examinations, to have directly motivated her full-time work in cinema. In her own rationale:

I wouldn't have been a filmmaker without studying in la Fémis.... Meeting many people and having the opportunity to work on projects, and to discuss these projects with interesting professional people ... I'm very positive about la Fémis. I did interesting things in there.

(Palmer 2004)

Actively inspired by this environment, de Van saw herself as not merely a trainee, but rather as someone actively engaged in filmmaking *research*. Subsequently, in her experiments behind and before the camera, as writer, director and actress, de Van began to conceive of film as the means for startlingly intimate studies – artistic diagnoses – of the body, often her own, on-screen. De Van pursued the disjunctive capacity of film, its ability to divorce psychology from physicality, by displacing the body of a real person into abstracted images on-screen. In what amounts to declarations of cinematic principle, de Van has stated that she 'wanted to approach that most essential topic: the body as matter... a distance between self and body' (Le Vern 2002: 1); and, 'more than being an actor, I wanted to film myself' (Rouyer 2002: 28). This point of departure led initially to a pair of shorts made while she was taking classes: *Bien sous tous rapports* (1996) and *Rétention* (1997), both of which, in their unflinching material and style, very much reflect the unusual technical and creative liberty endorsed by la Fémis. *Bien sous tous rapports* concerns a young woman, played by de Van, who is disturbed by her parents while attempting to perform oral sex, and then, bizarrely, instructed closely by them on how to improve her technique. *Rétention*, also enacted by de Van herself, depicts a young woman who becomes neurotically obsessed with her own physicality, exploring the contours of her form, preoccupied with her bodily functions, eventually refusing to discard any excretions from her own body.

These early ventures synthesized de Van's creative interest in the filmed – hence, stylized and dysfunctional – body. The shorts also gave de Van exposure and allowed her to network. In 1997, upon her formal graduation, in keeping with school tradition, all of the student films were shown publicly, a screening at which François Ozon, another la Fémis graduate, was present. Ozon's response to de Van's shorts was instant excitement. Struck by her direction, theme and performances, he on the spot declared her to be his feminine double, a perfect match for his filmmaking sensibility, and so invited her to work with him. Thus followed a fruitful symbiosis, an informal yet concentrated creative partnership characterized by de Van as 'fed day by day through our discussions... about murky and difficult engagements with the body' (Rouyer 2002: 28). De Van took lead roles in Ozon's *Regarde la mer/See the Sea* and *Sitcom* (1998), collaborated as scriptwriter on the former and *Les Amants criminels/Criminal Lovers* (1999), then co-wrote for him *Sous le sable/Under the Sand* (2000) and *8 femmes/8 Women* (2002). Out of these encounters came a series of successful psychodramas, many of which are linked to the *cinéma du corps* at that time emerging. *Regarde la mer*, for example, charts the festering psychosis of Tatiana, a young wanderer, performed in a glacial deadpan by de Van, who becomes sexually and emotionally fixated upon a young mother, whom she eventually lacerates and murders. *Sitcom*, a pitch-black comedy, situates de Van's character at the epicentre of an imploding bourgeois French family; she paralyzes herself

from the waist down after a failed suicide attempt, yet still attempts physical sensation through acts of sexual sadomasochism. Both of de Van's roles, in addition, are scripted and performed for long periods in silence, making her abrupt violent and sexual outbursts seem less tied to psychological motivations. A gap emerges, once again, between mind and body.

Like the work of other filmmakers attuned to the *cinéma du corps* – the insidious cyber-pornography conspiracy in Assayas's *demonlover*, the rape-revenge course of Noé's *Irréversible*, the bloody bouts of sexual cannibalism in Denis's *Trouble Every Day* – much of Ozon's non-comedic work with de Van represents socio-sexual deviance through acts which are horrifically, but above all physically, criminal. These are films about violence perpetrated on others, rendering victimized bodies as objects subject to graphically brutal urges. At the (amicable) conclusion of her collaborations with Ozon, however, de Van's work systematically inverted this motif, exploring dysfunctional physicality that manifests through violence turned instead on *oneself*, on one's own body. What emerges, in style and content, is perhaps the most incisive statement yet of the *cinéma du corps*: de Van's embodiment of corporeal malaise through self-mutilation.

### In the skin of Marina de Van

The origins of *Dans ma peau* can be traced to an accident that de Van had as an eight-year old, when a car ran over her right leg. The limb was left horrifically wounded, the rough edge of a snapped bone protruding through its flesh and skin. De Van recalls the incident from a remarkably distanced perspective:

I felt no sense of panic, no pain, even though I should have passed out. I saw my leg as just another object, a deformed object... a scrap.... Later, at school, my scars became a kind of game. My friends and I amused ourselves by sticking them with needles, because my skin had become numb there. I felt proud, but at the same time this insensitivity was frightening.

(Piazzo 2002: 35)

From this childhood experience, and, later, her formative work in cinema, emerge de Van's motives as a filmmaker. She challenges a fundamental cinematic convention that treats bodies on-screen as primarily the means for character formation: as physically active, outgoing and functional, more often than not traditionally attractive, and, crucially, the site of readable behaviour from which derives overt psychology. Instead, de Van dwells on the body in and of itself, probing its nature as material substance, a sometimes compromised organic vessel or container. Represented through de Van's camera, the body becomes matter abstracted from mind, the source of peculiarly remote sensation, or else, complete disassociation and passive disconnect.

The narrative of *Dans ma peau* concerns Esther, played by de Van. At a party, she scrapes open the calf of her right leg after stumbling onto exposed metal outside her host's house. Despite the severity of the injury Esther seems barely concerned, delaying her visit to the hospital (where a bemused doctor asks her dryly, 'Are you sure it's your leg?') and apparently feeling little distress. But increasingly she becomes fixated on the wounds.

At home, she worries her sutures and reopens her cuts, much to the frustration of her boyfriend, Vincent (Laurent Lucas). At her office, where she works as an international market researcher, Esther starts to tear at the leg itself, finding relief in widening her gashes and making them bleed. The self-mutilations worsen. At an important business dinner, Esther slashes her arm with a knife under the table, then digs her fork into the wounds, drifting apart from the conversation as her irritated boss looks on. To mask the source of her self-inflicted abrasions from Vincent, Esther even stages a car wreck. So advanced does Esther's (self-)alienation become, that in the latter stages of the film, like Bergman's *Persona* (1966), the narrative strategically breaks down. Esther isolates herself, and a series of graphic tableaux depict subjectively her violent explorations of her body. No specific contexts, or explanations, or resolution is granted, and the film ends with a repeated series of tracking close-ups of Esther alone in a hotel room, her body maimed, but her face and emotions at least partially becalmed.

At the centre of *Dans ma peau*, de Van's Esther, like many of the stark and physically brutalized characterizations in the *cinéma du corps*, is an extraordinary feat of performance. De Van as writer-director obliges de Van as actress to enact scenes of complete physical exposure and extreme vulnerability, at times verging on humiliation. The subject of the film, unmistakably, is a protracted examination and systematic analysis of de Van's own body; its narrative is inscribed onto her flesh. Just after Esther's injury, for example, in an extended medium shot that is lit harshly to flatten her skin tones, the camera tracks over de Van's naked body as she inspects herself closely, obsessively, pinching and pulling at her oddly elastic skin while lying in a bathtub. Later, at a public swimming pool, a terrified Esther is accosted by a group of male work colleagues who grab her and drench her with water, causing blood to seep through her trouser leg, darkening her thigh area like a menstrual stain. It is suggestive to link such images to a feminist agenda, but de Van herself downplays this reading, insisting that Esther's estrangement is corporeal and not gender-specific, an abstracting form of narcissism that craves tangible release (Palmer 2005).

Such were the demands of this theme and role that de Van forcibly instilled in herself an impartiality about her own body, the film's raw material. For a year in advance she carried out actorly exercises designed to increase her objectivity and self-detachment: walking around in uncomfortable shoes, buying and wearing clothes that she disliked, growing her fingernails to awkward lengths and so on (Haddad 2002: 3). Closer to the shoot, she hired an acting coach, Marc Adjadj, to dissect her mannerisms, sustain her performance and re-interpret for her the physical nuances of the script that she herself had written (Palmer 2004). The end product is that de Van's acting technique drastically pares down her character's emotional range. More so than the roles with Ozon, she portrays Esther in a kind of narcotized withdrawal that is austere, but strangely engrossing, at times even tragic. Even in scenes of acute physical crisis, when Esther literally turns on herself, de Van allows herself only flickers of facial response, a neutrality that does not seek sympathy from the viewer. Esther subjects herself to graphic traumas – hands stab, fingers

make incisions, blood oozes and congeals – but de Van’s eyes and face often remain neutral or completely glazed, in stasis, betraying only an eerie calm.

While de Van herself resists broader interpretations of the film, in its *mise-en-scène* *Dans ma peau* at least partly links Esther’s plight to sterile social contexts and a critique of contemporary careerism. As Jacques Mandelbaum suggests, there is an ‘opposition of the individual body and of the social body, a backlash against the fragmentary corporatization of humanity’ (Mandelbaum 2002: 34). Thus, the film’s opening frames are divided in half, as images of faceless modern architecture offer us soulless establishing shots, a succession of banal, functional objects that also introduce the body of Esther herself, which we initially see arranged at an office console. Elsewhere, *Dans ma peau* underlines the irony that as Esther rises professionally, she unravels personally. After she is promoted, Esther’s colleague Sandrine (Léa Drucker), her only confidante, abruptly abandons her, failing pointedly to help when she is assaulted at the swimming pool. The motif of professional/personal disjunction also emerges in *Dans ma peau*’s pivotal sequence – a set piece widely admired by critics – which takes place during an abortive business dinner, as Esther tunes out of the facile professional dialogue, and de Van reveals her literal disembodiment with a shot of Esther’s severed forearm, a lifelike prosthesis, lying on the table in front of her. (A similar albeit less overt device is used in Pierre-Olivier Mornas’s *Comme si de rien n’était/As If Nothing Happened*, 2003, when a terminally ill character’s uncontrollably shaking hand is framed by itself, separately, as if divorced from the body to which it nominally belongs.)



Figure 2: Esther in the restaurant toilet after she has mutilated her arm.

Indeed, *Dans ma peau*’s narrative trajectory highlights the lack of social surroundings that might safeguard its protagonist against drastic physical decline. Such material links de Van’s film again to the *cinéma du corps*, in

which husbands, wives and lovers prove inadequate, supportive family units are strikingly absent, corporate hierarchies involve themselves not at all, and forces of authority or government fail to intervene. This ubiquitous anxiety about absent or fragmented communities reflects contemporary France itself, which has become increasingly marked by social solitude. Recent census data confirms that 7.2 million French people now live by themselves, making up nearly one-third of the nation's households (INSEE 2005). By extension, devoid of the 'civilized' contexts of collective society, human behaviour in the *cinéma du corps* is typically reduced to its most primal, atavistic instincts. As Michelle Scatton-Tessier observes, recent French films of this type dwell on 'a shift away from traditional values of family and religion ... [towards] a microscopic examination of misery, awkwardness, and identity crisis' (Scatton-Tessier 2004: 199). Esther, an iconic and representative *cinéma du corps* protagonist, is left socially isolated, personally traumatized and dangerously alone.

Coupled to this is a central paradox of *Dans ma peau*, that Esther's increasingly violent ruptures are grounded in the familiar and everyday. For in contrast to David Cronenberg's *Crash* (1996) – a cited influence on *Dans ma peau* that is referenced by Esther's own abortive car accident – de Van avoids connecting self-mutilation to obvious deviance or body horror. Unlike *Crash*, *Dans ma peau* depicts neither a nocturnal underworld of social outcasts, nor a shared conspiracy of self-abuse drawn from pent-up nihilism and rage. Instead, Esther exists in a blank, impassive diegetic world. Her days are spent hunched over a computer monitor, busy with reports and data entry, punctuated briefly by stressful exchanges at work and home. When Esther cuts herself for the first time, crouched in an office archive, de Van pointedly cuts away to yet more shots of sterile glass skyscrapers. Moreover, while Esther's actions offer unstated responses to a numbing routine, they typically take place in bathrooms or bedrooms, as extensions of conventional rituals like grooming, cleaning and self-examination. Over the course of *Dans ma peau*, Esther's behaviour moves her simply and undramatically from self-scrutiny to self-injury. As de Van suggests, furthermore, in contrast to the world around her, these self-explorations are arrestingly intimate, ironically showing 'a kind of tenderness and curiosity ... a softness and sweetness in the way Esther touches her own skin and blood' (Palmer 2005).

There is more, however, to both *Dans ma peau* and the *cinéma du corps* than social diagnostics. Like many of its related contemporaries, *Dans ma peau* is also in part an experiment in lyrical cinema. At pivotal moments of Esther's condition, the film attempts to convey perceptual experience directly on-screen; it deploys poetic aesthetic techniques, sensory impressions that stylistically outrun and strategically overwhelm its narrative. De Van, a self-declared formalist, prepared comprehensively in this context. She shot extensive stylistic tests of each and every shot on digital video before exposing any celluloid, storyboarded meticulously, outlined arrays of editing options in advance, and met repeatedly with her cinematographer, Pierre Barouquier, to develop framing, lighting, compositional and optical effects. The results are formidable, occasionally recalling the work of avant-garde pioneer Stan Brakhage – particularly *Dog Star Man* (1961–64) – as well as, more recently, the abstract stylistic devices that

inform *Irreversible*, *Sombre*, *Trouble Every Day*, and many other *cinéma du corps* texts. De Van describes her project as attempting 'to privilege eye and mind... to enter into [Esther's] perceptions and emotions to create a deeper association with her intimate and sensorial experience' (Palmer 2005).

Such immersive formal strategies can induce profound, and profoundly alienating, cinematic sensations. Just before Esther's climactic breakdown, for example, as she flees from an urban environment that is suddenly registered as claustrophobic and threatening, de Van's stylistic design becomes radically amorphous. On the soundtrack, the aural balance and tone shift abruptly, rendering the noise of supermarkets and shoppers as muted, discordant and obscure. The image jumps between fast and normal motion, with passers-by blurring past Esther in distorted point-of-view shots. The camera racks focus unevenly, as planes of colour, bright light and texture collide and juxtapose. Most jarringly of all, the film then shifts to a three-minute split screen sequence of paired handheld images that represent Esther's state of withdrawal. Twinned shots move us inexorably from the banal (images of groceries, plastic bags, furniture, the interior of a hotel room) to the corporeal (swathes of blood, gouged flesh, ravaged body parts). While the design hints at Esther's recoil and collapse, its effects extend beyond this, becoming a 'pure' cinema of non-representational collage. Olivier de Bruyn calls the outcome a 'poetics of pain' (de Bruyn 2002: 27). De Van links the split-screen device to the screen itself being wounded, cut in half, so as 'to suggest by this formal progression something about the progression of Esther herself... she's devoured by closeness, by her sensations' (Palmer 2005). From a synthesized and socialized physical whole, at this point of (non-) narrative climax, Esther is left a raw, chaotically subjective perceptual composite.

Building from such stylistic elements, a vital focal point of both *Dans ma peau* and the *cinéma du corps* overall arises from its impact on the spectator. Much of the hostility directed at these films centres on their ability to shock, disturb, and consciously 'dis'please their audiences. But why need this effect be considered in wholly negative terms? So long theorized and conceived of as an entirely passive recipient, the spectator of the *cinéma du corps* is instead a profoundly active participant. Set before *Dans ma peau* and its contemporaries, our role as an apprehender is a challenging but exhilarating one. We are compelled to assemble narrative across dissonant ellipses and omissions; our confrontation is with performances at their most raw and visceral; we are experientially subsumed by virtuoso stylistic practices; and powerfully engaged by abstract, perceptual cinematic data. Those I interviewed after watching *Dans ma peau* often spoke of the experience as having been neither easy nor instantly enjoyable, but rather as unexpectedly rewarding, satisfying in large part *because* of the range of demands placed upon them by de Van. Both staunchly uncompromising and brutally direct, the *cinéma du corps* is cognitively stimulating to an unprecedented degree. This is filmmaking – and film viewing – without a safety net.

### **Possibilities for the *cinéma du corps***

To conclude this discussion we can re-situate, and in effect re-justify, what I have called here the *cinéma du corps*. Most crucially there is the issue of

cultural and artistic revival. Without doubt, the *cinéma du corps* phenomenon has either loosely influenced or directly galvanized an assortment of exciting filmmakers. Its stylistic and thematic principles now inform the careers of both women and men, French directors and other Europeans, newcomers fresh from la Fémis and veterans long acclimatized to the slings and arrows of festival filmmaking. I began by citing some of the best-known practitioners of the *cinéma du corps*, but to this ongoing tendency can also be connected fellow participants including Jean-Marc Barr, Bertrand Bonello, Laurent Bouhnik, Jean-Claude Brisseau, Olivier Dahan, Xavier Giannoli, Christophe Honoré, Didier le Pêcheur, Robert Salis and others. The list grows, as does its catalogue of achievements in cinematic and artistic experimentation.

More broadly, French film culture, historically so often the impetus for major developments in world cinema, is today once again of central significance. Nowadays, assertions about the irredeemable banality or even terminal decline of modern filmmaking abound. As cinema enters the twenty-first century it does so under fire; it is declared overreliant on CGI spectacle, excessively attuned to the demands of underachieving stars and cautious media conglomerates, and, more insidiously, deemed stylistically formulaic and bereft of innovation in both the mainstream and the festival circuit alike. To such ubiquitous critical discourse, the *cinéma du corps* offers a sharp rejoinder. A range of contemporary French filmmakers, Marina de Van notably included, is clearly rising to this challenge. Assertive in its radical techniques, startlingly – albeit disconcertingly – creative in its design, the *cinéma du corps* conveys forcibly its provocative materials, fraught on-screen treatments of the body that evoke new levels of perceptual engagement from the viewer. As Olivier Joyard has put it, this group is collectively approaching ‘what may well be the next frontier of cinema’ (Joyard 2002: 12). From film schools to film festivals and beyond, French cinema has found a new cutting edge.

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### **Suggested citation**

- Palmer, T. (2006), 'Under your skin: Marina de Van and the contemporary French *cinéma du corps*', *Studies in French Cinema* 6: 3, pp. 171–181, doi: 10.1386/sfci.6.3.171/1

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