



## Extreme Cinema

The Transgressive Rhetoric of Today's Art Film Culture

by Mattias Frey

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### DESCRIPTION

**Honorable mention, 2017 Best Monograph Award from the British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies (BAFTSS)**

From *Shortbus* to *Shame* and from *Oldboy* to *Irreversible*, film festival premieres regularly make international headlines for their shockingly graphic depictions of sex and violence. Film critics and scholars alike often regard these movies as the work of visionary auteurs, hailing directors like Michael Haneke and Lars von Trier as heirs to a tradition of transgressive art. In this provocative new book, Mattias Frey offers a very different perspective on these films, exposing how they are also calculated products, designed to achieve global notoriety in a competitive marketplace.

Paying close attention to the discourses employed by film critics, distributors, and filmmakers themselves, *Extreme Cinema* examines the various tightropes that must be walked when selling transgressive art films to discerning audiences, distinguishing them from generic horror, pornography, and Hollywood product while simultaneously hyping their salacious content. Deftly tracing the links between the local and the global, Frey also shows how the directors and distributors of extreme art house fare from both Europe and East Asia have significant incentives to exaggerate the exotic elements that would differentiate them from Anglo-American product.

*Extreme Cinema* also includes original interviews with the programmers of several leading international film festivals and with niche distributors and exhibitors, giving readers a revealing look at how these institutions enjoy a symbiotic relationship with the “taboo-breakers” of art house cinema. Frey also demonstrates how these apparently transgressive films actually operate within a strict set of codes and conventions, carefully calibrated to perpetuate a media industry that fuels itself on provocation.

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MATTIAS FREY is the managing director of the Centre for Film and Media Research, an editor of the journal *Film Studies*, and a reader in film at the University of Kent, UK. He is the author or coeditor of several books, including *The Permanent Crisis of Film Criticism*; *Cine-Ethics*; and *Film Criticism in the Digital Age* (Rutgers University Press).

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