

ARTS & VARIETY

Movie Review: The Assistant

BY MATTHEW IUNG

The *Assistant*, written and directed by Kitty Green, is a striking look at the realities of what it means to lack agency and the institutional complicity that is present in systems of abuse. The film follows Jane, played by Julia Garner, through one complete workday at the production company she works for. Jane is the personal assistant to the company's executive, who the audience never actually sees.

The character of the executive is a menacing presence that, while we don't see him on this particular workday, has a sense of fear around him. He throws things at his workers, screams, and calls to berate his workers harshly. Jane's relationship with her boss is strained; she is rarely acknowledged for her work and always settles with having to deal with the most difficult issues. The executive's wife calls the office more than once, yelling and crying. Jane, not knowing how to respond, does her best trying to keep calm and respond evenly. It's apparent that this is not the first time that this has occurred. Jane's boss is quick to call and drives her to tears with the pressure he puts on her and his sharp rebuke.

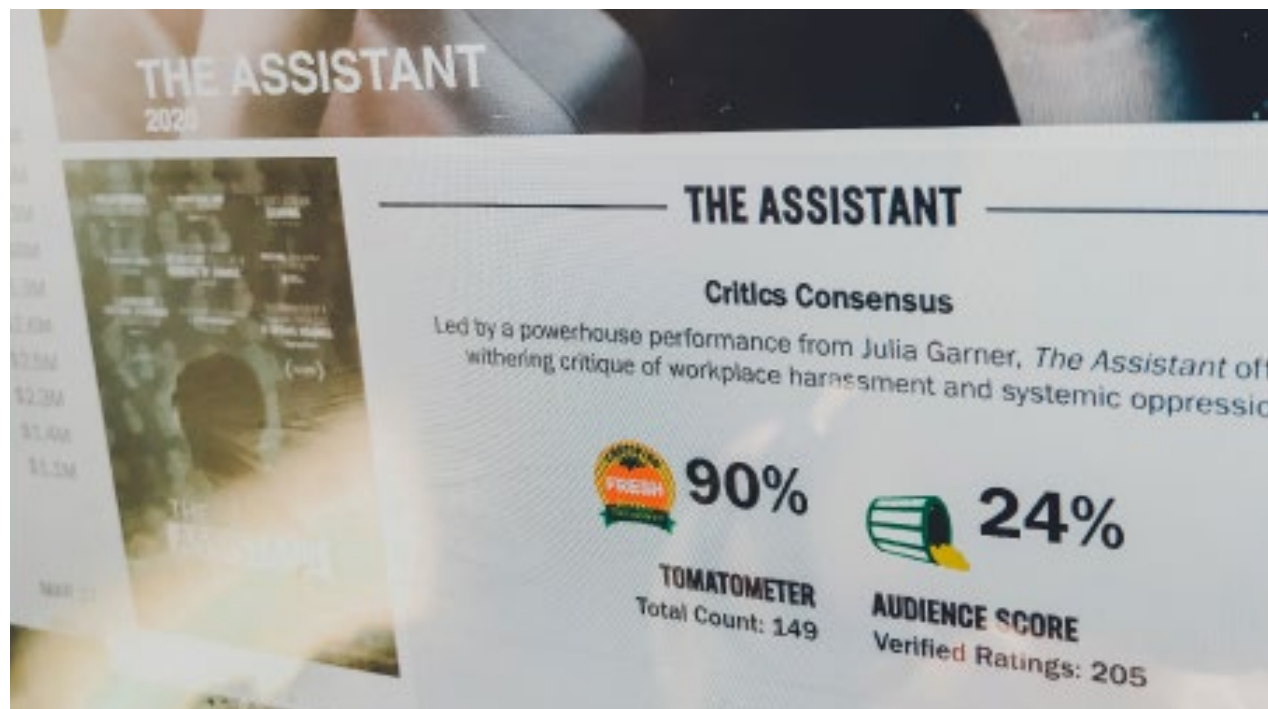
Throughout the film, we come to find that Jane's job as an assistant is unpaid and that she is still a student who is trying to work her way up through this company and into the film industry. Jane's position is a unique one because she is responsible for everything from packing her bosses' bag to washing dishes; she has no power to make her voice heard.

The Assistant is not a film about how assistants are the unsung heroes of every office or how they go unnoticed. This is a movie that is taking a very serious look at the way that women are and have been treated in the casting couch culture and Weinstein's style of abuse. Though this is a serious and somewhat graphic subject, it's dealt with through quiet and serious implications for Jane. Throughout the film, the entry of the office, men, women, assistants, and drivers all show that they know and understand that the Executive uses his position to abuse young women.

The film's pinnacle, and longest unbroken sequence, comes when Jane goes to HR to attempt not only to articulate her worries but see if something can be done about the abuse she is seeing. This is a tense scene, and Julia Garner is absolutely captivating in her uncomfortable attempts to get to the core of what she has to say. Even though it won't come as a surprise to many audience members, it is still heart wrenching and disturbing when she is mocked by the man behind the HR desk. He tells her that she is smart and wouldn't want to throw all of this away over something like what she thinks she is seeing.

The emphasis on the entire office knowing what is happening shows just how many people it takes saying nothing for one man to be able to get away with whatever he wants. It's painful to have to watch Jane struggle with how to cope and continue working there. She has no one to go to, and this compounded with the pressure from everyone around her forces her into silence.

The movie runs about 90 minutes, and though that is short, it by no means detracts from the way the film drags its viewers through a day in Jane's life. *The Assistant* will be a hard watch for some, and the truth is it's not for everyone. If you are looking for a dark glimpse of a world that is not your own, I recommend this movie. It's worth making clear though that its grim look at this subject means that nothing happens. It's not a #MeToo action movie. It's intended to portray the inner conflict of someone who is caught up in the system of abuse.



Reviewing "The Assistant" movie by Kitty Green. CREDIT: Victoria Turcios

Art in the Cities: The Minnesota Center for Book Art

BY ALEXANDRIA GOSEN

There is an amazing little spot, a hidden nook, between the Guthrie and US Bank Stadium. A beautiful place for writers, artists, and book enthusiasts. The Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA) is a place more off the beaten track, but still a fantastic stop. Here, they specialize in book art. This includes binding, origami, making journals, and printing. They have a very small gallery that is cute but a little underwhelming given its size.

The gallery is, as previously stated, underwhelming. The work itself is great, but it is definitely not the main reason I nor anyone goes to MCBA. The current exhibition is entitled *The Great Journey*; it's essentially a showcase for their new book of the same name. The story follows a waterfall and its journey. The exhibition focuses on the process of making a book like this. There is a video guide that goes into detail on how almost every piece was made or selected. For example, they go into detail on the layered printing techniques used to get their images. There is also a section on the process of binding the book and selecting the paper to print on. The art itself is very calming, as it focuses on water and nature-inspired pieces. The book the gallery focuses on is available for purchase in their gift store. In some ways, the gift store is an art exhibit in itself. Many members of the MCBA will sell the journals and planners they make there. They are all artistic and unique.

It was a very interesting experience, and I will be going back to MCBA; I just wish the gallery was more extensive. Though interesting, it was a lackluster experience. When you go to a location called The Minnesota Center for Book Arts, you expect more art than what you truly receive.

The gallery is not the primary reason people visit MCBA. This location offers a wide range of other things: workshops, studio space, mentorships, and various other things. Many schools bring their younger students to this place on field trips where they print, bind, and publish their own books. This venue also offers a quiet space where many aspiring novelists and students sit and work. You can find these people upstairs by the offices, in the library, or in the fabulous cafe, which serves coffee, alcohol, and lunch foods.