

The 18th Century according to Guffroy

BY RUTH E. GOLDBERG

From within the oddly-shaped cluster of rough wooden set backs comes the familiar cry "Attention." The surrounding off-camera life of tape measures and ladders, hair spray and spray paint, cigarettes and sandwiches stops abruptly. Film director Milos Forman growls "action" and with a slap of the clapboard, silence reigns in building F of Eclair Studios in Epinay, a suburb north of Paris. Here, the Czech director hailed for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Hair*, *Ragtime* and *Amadeus* and his Czech/American crew have been filming *Valmont*, an adaptation of the 18th-century French play, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*.

The plot of *Valmont* is already familiar to many through Stephen Frear's *Dangerous Liaisons* film, as well as the West End and Broadway productions which spawned the current interest. With a bountiful budget from Renn Productions (*The Bear* and *Jean de Florette*), Forman's company was able to afford the best of all possible worlds: returning Parisian streets and open markets to original period states for exterior shots and constructing chateau and carriage sets for interior scenes. This allows for period accuracy as well as control in lighting conditions and camera accessibility.

Charged with recreating *Valmont*'s era, arguably the most opulent in Western history, is production designer Pierre Guffroy. At 63, Guffroy has worked with directors as diverse as Jean Cocteau, Luis Buñuel, Robert Bresson and François Truffaut. He is probably best known for his touch with Roman Polanski. With Polanski's *Tess*, Guffroy won the 1981 Oscar for best set decoration and was also nominated for a César. He won the best decor César for Polanski's *Pirates* in 1986, honoring the actual Spanish galleon that Guffroy took from scratchpad to shipyard over three years. His first Academy Award nomination was in 1966 for *Is Paris Burning?*, while his first winning Cesar was in 1975—the year of the

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In *Valmont*, Milos Forman's film adaptation of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, production designer Pierre Guffroy recreated the interiors of an opulent chateau at the Eclair Studios in Epinay, outside Paris. Guffroy decorated with genuine antiques and bought real silks and velvets, such as those draped around the canape bed (1). "You can't get such folds with imitation materials," he notes.

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Pour *Valmont*, l'adaptation cinématographique des *Liaisons Dangereuses* de Milos Forman, le décorateur Pierre Guffroy a construit les intérieurs d'un château luxueux dans les studios d'Epinay aux alentours de Paris. Il a utilisé des meubles anciens et de véritables soies et velours comme ceux du lit à baldaquins (1). "On n'obtient pas les mêmes effets avec les tissus synthétiques" a précisé Guffroy.

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In *Valmont*, Milos Forman's Film nach dem Buch *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, baute der production designer Pierre Guffroy in den ausserhalb von Paris liegenden Eclair Studios in Epinay das Innere eines opulenten Schlosses nach. Guffroy stattete es mit echten antiken Mobiliar aus. Er kaufte echte Seide und Samt unter anderem fuer das canape bed (1). "Man kann solche Falten nicht mit Imitationen herstellen", bemerkte er.

PIERRE GUFFROY DESIGNS MILOS FORMAN'S
VALMONT