

Love, Trust and Betrayal: Killers of the Flower Moon [C1]

Martin Scorsese dirige Robert De Niro e Leonardo DiCaprio in questo adattamento, una via di mezzo fra il western e il true crime, del libro di David Grann sugli omicidi avvenuti agli inizi degli anni '20 del secolo scorso in una riserva di nativi americani.



An epic western crime drama film directed by Martin Scorsese, Killers of the Flower Moon is based on the 2017 non-fiction book by David Grann. Set in 1920s Oklahoma in the American Midwest, it tells the true story of serial murders of members of Native American tribe the Osage Nation. The movie stars Robert De Niro as real-life figure William Hale, and Leonardo DiCaprio as his [nephew](#) Ernest Burkhart. Both are [self-appointed](#) white guardians [sanctioned](#) by US law to look after the Osage's wealth after oil is discovered on their land. Ernest marries Osage woman Mollie, but then follows his uncle's orders to steal the tribe's money by killing its people, one by one.

CRIMINAL COMPLICITY

Scorsese and co-writer Eric Roth spent years adapting Grann's book for the screen. As the director explains, they'd quickly realised that so systemic were the crimes it described that the story was less a whodunnit than a 'who didn't do it'. Before filming began, Scorsese approached the Osage [elders](#), who [a century on](#) still felt the injustice of a system [intent on](#) destroying them. Scorsese told them that this film would [endeavour](#) to be truthful and authentic. **Martin Scorsese** (American accent): I had some meetings with the Osage. I learned about the people themselves and the stories. Their values are about love and respect and loving the Earth. Every time they spoke, it just reoriented me as to what we're doing here; we're making a movie, yes, but what we're doing here on Earth. The more I found out, the more I wanted to put in [but] without making it [fussy](#). It had to feel natural: even to the designs of the [blankets](#) and who the people were standing in the background.

TWISTED LOVE

Unlike the book, the movie centres on a love story as a means to reflect its wider themes of [trust](#) and [betrayal](#). DiCaprio spoke about his preparation for the role of [weak](#), [greedy](#) husband Ernest. **Leonardo DiCaprio** (American accent): It was really a [throwback](#) to epic films of the 1940s that have at its [their] centre this very [twisted](#), bizarre love story. Marty [Scorsese] is able to expose the humanity of some of the most sinister characters. I think the [gamble](#) was to take on this incredibly important story that really was a [reckoning](#) with our past. We were talking to the community trying to hear the real stories and trying to incorporate the truth as best we possibly could.

TULSA MASSACRE

Lily Gladstone is an American actress of Blackfoot and Nimíipuu tribe heritage. To play Ernest's wife Mollie, she [drew on](#) the spirit of her [great-grandmother](#), a devout Catholic but also a traditional Blackfoot woman. Gladstone spoke of the necessary truths that the film exposed: the

attempts to suppress the Osage Nation which were experienced by other Native American tribes across the US. But also the massacres of affluent Black Americans who, because of their material success, threatened the very notion of white supremacy. In May 1921, mobs of white residents attacked wealthy Black residents in Tulsa, Oklahoma, [looting](#) their homes and businesses. Scorsese and his team are in a unique position of influence, says Gladstone. Their choice to tell these stories makes them powerful allies to a forgotten community. **Lily Gladstone**(American accent): We're speaking of the 1920s Osage community, we're talking about Tulsa, we're talking about why the world does not know about these things: it's so central to how we understand our place in the world. Mollie is an Osage woman who conducts herself with grace and with measure, but also with humour and with [unshakeable](#) strength. Native peoples are used to having anthropologists come in, curious about everything that we do. [But] these artistic souls cared about telling a story that [pierces](#) the veil of what society tells us we're supposed to care about. Really, who else is going to challenge people to challenge their own complicity in white supremacy?

BANALITY OF EVIL

De Niro says that he could never fully understand why William Hale [behaved](#) as he did, and why others continued to support him. He can, however, recognise Hale in certain high-profile figures today; they too are widely admired, says the actor, despite their dangerous stupidity. **Robert De Niro** (American accent): Hale felt he was loved by the people and some people probably did love him. He has to be charming, he has [to win people over](#). Part of it with him I guess is sincere, it's just the other part where he's betraying them... We see it today: there's a feeling of [entitlement](#) we [became a lot more aware](#) of after George Floyd. It's systemic racism. It's the banality of evil. It's the thing that we have to watch out for. It's there, you've got to really keep your eye on it.

FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN US

Geoffrey [Standing Bear](#) is the Principal Chief of the Osage Nation. As he explained, when Scorsese approached him about making the film he was impressed by the director's sincerity and his desire to bring the Osage in to all aspects of filming. **Geoffrey [Standing Bear](#)** (American accent): I asked Mr Scorsese, "How are you going to approach the story?" And he said, "I'm going to tell a story about [trust](#); [trust](#) between the outside world and the Osage, and a [betrayal](#) of those [trusts](#). We're going to film with the Osage, we're going to invite Osage to come in not only as extras, but behind the cameras or employed in making the [costumes](#)". You see our language, which is endangered, spoken. My people suffered greatly and to this very day those effects are with us. I can't say [on behalf of](#) the Osage [that] Marty Scorsese and his team have [restored trust](#), but they've made friendships between us all. And they impressed upon me how hard these actors work, how serious this business is to them. THE OSAGE NATION The term 'Osage' is a French version of the tribe's name, which can be translated as "calm water". The Native American tribe developed in the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys around 700 [BCE](#) along with other groups of its language family. They migrated west after the 17th century, [settling](#) near the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. In the 19th century, the Osage were forced to leave Kansas for present-day Oklahoma. Then, in the early 20th century, oil was discovered on their land. As they had retained communal mineral rights, many Osage became wealthy. This, however, led to manipulation, fraud and murder by outsiders [eager](#) to steal what was theirs.

Glossary

- **sanctioned** = sancire, autorizzare
- **a century on** = un secolo dopo
- **entitlement** = legittimazione
- **Standing Bear** = orso in piedi
- **trust** = fiducia
- **twisted** = contorta
- **costumes** = costumi
- **BCE** = prima dell'era comune (before Common Era)
- **reckoning** = resa dei conti
- **to win people over** = conquistare le persone
- **became a lot more aware** = rendersi conto
- **on behalf of** = nel nome di
- **self-appointed** = auto-nominati
- **endeavour** = adoperarsi
- **fussy** = puntiglioso
- **betrayal** = tradimento
- **behaved** = comportarsi
- **settling** = sistemarsi, stabilirsi
- **elders** = anziani
- **intent on** = intenzionato a
- **greedy** = avaro
- **nephew** = nipote (di zii)
- **drew on** = ricorrere a
- **looting** = saccheggiare
- **unshakeable** = irremovibile
- **pierces** = perforare
- **restored** = ripristinare
- **blankets** = coperte
- **weak** = debole
- **gamble** = scommessa
- **eager** = bramosi
- **throwback** = tuffo nel passato
- **great-grandmother** = bisnonna