

= Darren Aronofsky =

Darren Aronofsky (born February 12 , 1969) is an American film director , screenwriter , film producer and environmentalist . He has received acclaim for his often surreal , disturbing films and has been noted for frequent collaborations with cinematographer Matthew Libatique , film editor Andrew Weisblum and composer Clint Mansell . His films have generated controversy and are known for their often violent , bleak subject matter . " The themes in the six Aronofsky ' s films from 1998 to 2014 include the search for perfection , the search for happiness , longing for love , intoxication with publicity , the pain of alienation , and the burden of responsibility . "

Aronofsky attended Harvard University , where he studied film and social anthropology , and the American Film Institute where he studied directing . He won several film awards after completing his senior thesis film , *Supermarket Sweep* , which went on to become a National Student Academy Award finalist . Aronofsky ' s feature debut , the surrealist psychological thriller *Pi* , was shot in November 1997 . The low @-@ budget , \$ 60 @,@ 000 production , starring Sean Gullette , was sold to Artisan Entertainment for \$ 1 million , and grossed over \$ 3 million ; Aronofsky won the Directing Award at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival and an Independent Spirit Award for best first screenplay .

Aronofsky ' s followup , the psychological drama *Requiem for a Dream* , was based on the novel of the same name by Hubert Selby , Jr . The film garnered strong reviews and received an Academy Award nomination for Ellen Burstyn ' s performance . After turning down an opportunity to direct an entry in the Batman film series and writing the World War II horror film *Below* , Aronofsky began production on his third film , the romantic fantasy sci @-@ fi drama *The Fountain* . The film received mixed reviews and performed poorly at the box @-@ office , but has since garnered a cult following .

His fourth film , the sports drama *The Wrestler* , was released to critical acclaim and both of the film ' s stars , Mickey Rourke and Marisa Tomei , received Academy Award nominations . In 2010 Aronofsky was an executive producer on *The Fighter* and his fifth feature film , the psychological horror film *Black Swan* , received further critical acclaim and many accolades , being nominated for five Academy Awards including Best Picture and Best Director and winning Best Actress for Natalie Portman ' s performance in the film . Aronofsky received nominations for Best Director at the Golden Globes , and a Directors Guild of America Award nomination . His sixth film , the biblically inspired epic *Noah* , was released in theaters on March 28 , 2014 .

= = Early life and education = =

Aronofsky was born in Brooklyn , New York , in 1969 , the son of public school teachers Charlotte and Abraham Aronofsky . He grew up in the borough ' s Manhattan Beach neighborhood , where " I was raised culturally Jewish , but there was very little spiritual attendance in temple . It was a cultural thing ? celebrating the holidays , knowing where you came from , knowing your history , having respect for what your people have been through . " He graduated from Edward R. Murrow High School . He has one sister , Patti , who attended a professional ballet school through high school . His parents would often take him to Broadway theater performances , which sparked his keen interest in show business .

During his youth , he trained as a field biologist with The School for Field Studies in Kenya in 1985 and Alaska in 1986 . He attended school in Kenya to pursue an interest in learning about ungulates . He later said , " [T] he School for Field Studies changed the way I perceived the world " . Aronofsky ' s interest in the outdoors led him to backpack his way through Europe and the Middle East . In 1987 he entered Harvard University , where he majored in social anthropology and studied filmmaking ; he graduated in 1991 .

He became seriously interested in film while attending Harvard after befriending Dan Schrecker , an aspiring animator . He met Sean Gullette at Harvard , who would go on to star in Aronofsky ' s first film , *Pi* . His other cinematic influences included Akira Kurosawa , Roman Polanski , Terry Gilliam , Shinya Tsukamoto , Hubert Selby , Jr . Spike Lee , and Jim Jarmusch .

Aronofsky 's senior thesis film , Supermarket Sweep , was a finalist in the 1991 Student Academy Awards . In 1992 , Aronofsky received his MFA degree in directing from the AFI Conservatory , where his classmates included Todd Field , Doug Ellin , Scott Silver and Mark Waters . He won the institute 's Franklin J. Schaffner Alumni Medal .

= = Career = =

= = = Early work = = =

Aronofsky 's debut feature , Pi (also known as ?) , was shot in November 1997 . The film was financed entirely from \$ 100 donations from friends and family . In return , he promised to pay each back \$ 150 if the film made money , and they would at least get screen credit if the film lost money . While visiting Israel as a youth he spent a couple days in an Orthodox yeshiva , an experience that later informed the movie . Producing the film with an initial budget of \$ 60 @, @ 000 , Aronofsky premiered Pi at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival , where he won the Best Director award . The film itself was nominated for a special Jury Award . Artisan Entertainment bought distribution rights for \$ 1 million . The film was released to the public later that year to critical acclaim and it grossed a total of \$ 3 @, @ 221 @, @ 152 at the box @-@ office .

Aronofsky followed his debut with Requiem for a Dream , a film based on Hubert Selby , Jr . ' s novel of the same name . He was paid \$ 50 @, @ 000 , and worked for three years with nearly the same production team as his previous film . Following the financial breakout of Pi , he was capable of hiring established stars , including Ellen Burstyn and Jared Leto , and received a budget of \$ 3 @, @ 500 @, @ 000 to produce the film . Production of the film occurred over the period of one year , with the film being released in October 2000 . The film went on to gross \$ 7 @, @ 390 @, @ 108 worldwide . Aronofsky received acclaim for his stylish direction , and was nominated for another Independent Spirit Award , this time for Best Director . The film itself was nominated for five awards in total , winning two , for Best Actress and Cinematography . Clint Mansell 's soundtrack for the film was also well @-@ regarded , and since their first collaboration in 1996 , Mansell has composed the music to every Aronofsky film . Ellen Burstyn was nominated for numerous awards , including for an Academy Award for Best Actress , and ultimately won the Independent Spirit Award . Aronofsky was awarded the PRISM Award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with the National Institute on Drug Abuse for the film 's depiction of drug abuse .

In May 2000 , Aronofsky was briefly attached to make an adaptation of David Wiesner 's 1999 children 's book Sector 7 for Nickelodeon Movies , the project remains unmade . In mid @-@ 2000 , Warner Bros. hired Aronofsky to write and direct Batman : Year One , which was to be the fifth film in the Batman franchise . Aronofsky , who collaborated with Frank Miller on an unproduced script for Ronin , brought Miller to co @-@ write Year One with him , intending to reboot the series . " It 's somewhat based on the comic book , " Aronofsky later said . " Toss out everything you can imagine about Batman ! Everything ! We 're starting completely anew . " Regular Aronofsky collaborator Matthew Libatique was set as cinematographer , and Aronofsky had also approached Christian Bale for the role of Batman . Bale later would be cast in the role for Batman Begins . After that project failed to develop , Aronofsky declined the opportunity to direct an entry in the Batman franchise .

In March 2001 , he helped write the screenplay to the horror film Below , which he also produced . In April 2001 , Aronofsky entered negotiations with Warner Bros. and Village Roadshow to direct a then @-@ untitled science fiction film , with Brad Pitt in the lead role . In June 2001 , actress Cate Blanchett entered talks to join the film , which Aronofsky , wanting the title to remain secret , had given the working title of The Last Man . Production was postponed to wait for a pregnant Blanchett to give birth to her child in December 2001 . Production was ultimately set for late October 2002 in Queensland and Sydney . By now officially titled The Fountain , the film had a budget of \$ 70 million , co @-@ financed by Warner Bros. and New Regency , which had filled the gap after Village Roadshow withdrew . Pitt left the project seven weeks before the first day of shooting , halting production . In February 2004 , Warner Bros. resurrected it on a \$ 35 million budget with Hugh

Jackman in the lead role . In August , actress Rachel Weisz filled the vacancy left by Blanchett . The Fountain was released on November 22 , 2006 , a day before the American Thanksgiving holiday ; ultimately it grossed \$ 15 @, @ 978 @, @ 422 in theaters worldwide . Audiences and critics were divided in their responses to it .

= = = Breakthrough = = =

In 2007 , Aronofsky hired writer Scott Silver to develop The Fighter with him . He had approached actor Christian Bale for the film , but Aronofsky dropped out because of its similarities to The Wrestler and to work on MGM 's RoboCop remake . In July 2010 , Aronofsky had left the project due to uncertainty over the financially distressed studio 's future . When asked about the film , he said , " I think I 'm still attached . I don 't know . I haven 't heard from anyone in a while . " Later during 2007 , Aronofsky said he was planning to film a movie about Noah 's Ark .

Aronofsky had the idea for The Wrestler for over a decade . He hired Robert D. Siegal to turn his idea into a script . The actor Nicolas Cage entered negotiations in October 2007 to star as Randy , the film 's protagonist . The following month Cage left the project , and Mickey Rourke replaced him in the lead role . Aronofsky said that Cage pulled out of the movie because the director wanted Rourke to star ; Aronofsky said , stating that Cage was " a complete gentleman , and he understood that my heart was with Mickey and he stepped aside . I have so much respect for Nic Cage as an actor and I think it really could have worked with Nic but , you know , Nic was incredibly supportive of Mickey and he is old friends with Mickey and really wanted to help with this opportunity , so he pulled himself out of the race . " Cage responded , " I wasn 't quote ' dropped ' from the movie . I resigned from the movie because I didn 't think I had enough time to achieve the look of the wrestler who was on steroids , which I would never do . " The roughly 40 @-@ day shoot began in January 2008 .

The Wrestler premiered at the 65th Venice International Film Festival . Initially flying under the radar , the film wound up winning the Golden Lion , the highest award at the world 's oldest film festival . The Wrestler received great critical acclaim , and both Rourke and co @-@ star Marisa Tomei received Academy Award , Golden Globe , SAG , and BAFTA nominations for their performances . Rourke won a Golden Globe , as did Bruce Springsteen for his original song written for the film . The Wrestler grossed \$ 44 @, @ 674 @, @ 354 worldwide on a budget of \$ 6 @, @ 000 @, @ 000 making it Aronofsky 's highest grossing film to that point .

Aronofsky 's next film was Black Swan , which had been in development since 2001 , a psychological thriller horror film about a New York City ballerina . The film starred actress Natalie Portman , whom Aronofsky had known since 2000 . She introduced Aronofsky to Mila Kunis , who joined the cast in 2009 . Black Swan had its world premiere as the opening film at the 67th Venice Film Festival on October 2010 . It received a standing ovation whose length Variety said made it " one of the strongest Venice openers in recent memory " .

Black Swan has received high praise from film critics , and received a record 12 Broadcast Film Critics Association nominations , four Independent Spirit Award nominations , four Golden Globe nominations , three SAG nominations , and many more accolades . Aronofsky received a Golden Globe nomination for Best Director . The film broke limited @-@ release box @-@ office records and grossed an unexpectedly high \$ 329 @, @ 398 @, @ 046 . On January 25 , 2011 , the film was nominated for a total of five Academy Awards ; Best Picture , Best Director , Best Actress , Best Cinematography and Best Film Editing and in March , Portman won as Best Actress . The film was awarded the PRISM Award from the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration for its depiction of mental health issues . Aronofsky served as an executive producer on The Fighter , which was also nominated for Best Picture at the Oscars .

= = = Larger budget production = = =

Aronofsky was attached to The Wolverine , which was scheduled to begin production in March 2011 , but he left the project due to scheduling issues . The film was set to be sixth entry of the X @-@

Men film series , featuring a story revolving around Wolverine 's adventures in Japan . In December 2011 , Aronofsky directed the music video for Lou Reed and Metallica 's " The View " from their album Lulu .

In 2011 , Aronofsky tried to launch production on Noah , a retelling of the Bible story of Noah 's Ark , projected for a \$ 115 million budget . By the following year , the film had secured funding and distribution from New Regency and Paramount Pictures , with Russell Crowe hired for the title role . The film adapted a serialized graphic novel written by Aronofsky and Ari Handel , published in French in October 2011 by the Belgian publisher Le Lombard . By July 2012 , Aronofsky 's crews were building an ark set in Oyster Bay , Long Island , New York . Aronofsky announced the start of filming on Noah on Twitter in the same month , tweeting shots of the filming in Iceland . The film featured Emma Watson , Anthony Hopkins , Logan Lerman , and Jennifer Connelly , with the latter having also starred in Requiem for a Dream . During its opening weekend , Noah held the largest non @-@ sequel opening within Russia and Brazil , and the fourth @-@ largest opening of all time . Aronofsky did not use live animals for the film , saying in a PETA video that " There 's really no reason to do it anymore because the technology has arrived . " The HSUS gave him their inaugural Humane Filmmaker Award in honor of his use of computer @-@ generated animals .

Aronofsky was set to direct an HBO series pilot called Hobgoblin . Announced on June 16 , 2011 , the series would have depicted a group of magicians and con artists who use their powers of deception to defeat Hitler during World War II . He was set to work on this project with Pulitzer Prize winning author Michael Chabon and his wife Ayelet Waldman . In June , 2013 , it was announced that HBO had dropped the show and Aronofsky had pulled out , as well . It was also announced that Aronofsky will produce an upcoming horror film , XOXO , written by Black Swan writer Mark Heyman . George Nolfi of the The Adjustment Bureau is set to direct the project , which will be overseen by Aronofsky .

On October 13 , 2015 , Variety reported that he was eyeing a spring start of his next directional untitled project based on his own script , and Jennifer Lawrence was in talks to join the film while there were no greenlit on any of her other projects . The project was not yet attached with any studio but it would probably go to New Regency under the first @-@ look deal with Aronofsky . Domhnall Gleeson , Michelle Pfeiffer & Ed Harris were added to the cast in April 2016 . On May 25 , 2016 the title was revealed as Day 6 and that the film would begin shooting in June in Montreal . The film began shooting on June 27 , 2016 .

= = Directing style = =

Aronofsky 's first two films , Pi and Requiem for a Dream , were low @-@ budget and used montages of extremely short shots , also known as hip hop montages . While an average 100 @-@ minute film has 600 to 700 cuts Requiem features more than 2 @,@ 000 . Split @-@ screen is used extensively , along with extremely tight closeups . Long tracking shots (including those shot with an apparatus strapping a camera to an actor , called the Snorricam) and time @-@ lapse photography are also prominent stylistic devices . Often with his films , Aronofsky alternates between extreme closeups and extreme distance shots to create a sense of isolation .

With The Fountain , Aronofsky restricted the use of computer @-@ generated imagery . Henrik Fett , the visual effects supervisor of Look Effects , said , " Darren was quite clear on what he wanted and his intent to greatly minimize the use of computer graphics ... [and] I think the results are outstanding . " He used more subtle directing in The Wrestler and Black Swan , which less visceral directing style showcases the acting and narratives . Aronofsky filmed both works with a muted palette and a grainy style . The cinematographer Matthew Libatique has collaborated with Aronofsky on five films , and film composer Clint Mansell has worked with him on all six films . Mansell 's music is an often important element of the films .

= = = Themes and influences = = =

Pi features several references to mathematics and mathematical theories . In a 1998 interview ,

Aronofsky acknowledged several influences for " Pi " :

" I 'm a big fan of Kurosawa and Fellini . In this film in particular I think there 's a lot of Roman Polanski influence and Terry Gilliam influence as well as a Japanese director named Shinya Tsukamoto ? he directed The Iron Man , Tetsuo . "

The visual style of " Pi " (and even " Requiem for a Dream ") features numerous similarities to the Japanese film Tetsuo : The Iron Man .

The majority of reviewers characterized Requiem for a Dream in the genre of " drug movies " , along with films like The Basketball Diaries , Trainspotting , Spun , and Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas . But , Aronofsky placed his movie in a wider context , saying :

Requiem for a Dream is not about heroin or about drugs ... The Harry @-@ Tyrone @-@ Marion story is a very traditional heroin story . But putting it side by side with the Sara story , we suddenly say , ' Oh , my God , what is a drug ? ' The idea that the same inner monologue goes through a person 's head when they 're trying to quit drugs , as with cigarettes , as when they 're trying to not eat food so they can lose 20 pounds , was really fascinating to me . I thought it was an idea that we hadn 't seen on film and I wanted to bring it up on the screen .

With his friend Ari Handel , Aronofsky developed the plot for The Fountain ; the director wrote the screenplay . In 1999 , Aronofsky thought that The Matrix redefined the science fiction genre in film . He sought to make a science fiction film that explored new territory , as did The Matrix and its predecessors Star Wars and 2001 : A Space Odyssey . He wanted to go beyond science fiction films with plots driven by technology and science .

In the Toronto International Film Festival interview conducted by James Rocchi , Aronofsky credited the 1957 Charles Mingus song " The Clown " as a major influence on The Wrestler . It 's an instrumental piece , with a poem read over the music about a clown who accidentally discovers the bloodlust of the crowds and eventually kills himself in performance .

Aronofsky called Black Swan a companion piece to The Wrestler , recalling one of his early projects about a love affair between a wrestler and a ballerina . He eventually separated the wrestling and the ballet worlds , considering them as " too much for one movie " . He compared the two films : " Wrestling some consider the lowest art ? if they would even call it art ? and ballet some people consider the highest art . But what was amazing to me was how similar the performers in both of these worlds are . They both make incredible use of their bodies to express themselves . " About the psychological thriller nature of Black Swan , actress Natalie Portman compared the film 's tone to Polanski 's 1968 film Rosemary 's Baby , while Aronofsky said Polanski 's Repulsion (1965) and The Tenant (1976) were " big influences " on the final film . Actor Vincent Cassel also compared Black Swan to Polanski 's early films , commenting that it was also influenced by Alejandro Jodorowsky ' movies and David Cronenberg 's early work .

= = Controversy = =

Several aspects of Aronofsky 's films have been controversial , most notably Requiem for a Dream , The Wrestler and Black Swan . Requiem for a Dream was originally set for release in 2000 , but it met with controversy in the United States , being rated NC @-@ 17 by the MPAA due to a graphic sex scene . Aronofsky appealed the rating , claiming that cutting any portion of the film would dilute its message . The appeal was denied and Artisan decided to release the film unrated .

The Wrestler has been condemned as an " anti @-@ Iranian " film in many Iran newspapers and websites , in response to a scene in which Mickey Rourke violently breaks a pole bearing an Iranian flag in half across his knee . Borna News , a state @-@ run Iranian newspaper , also criticized the heel (bad @-@ guy) wrestler character " The Ayatollah . " Portrayed as a villain , he wears Arabic items of clothing (keffiyeh and bisht) , which the newspaper believed was intended to lead audiences to associate Iranians with Arabs . In the wrestling ring , he wears a skimpy leotard in the pattern of an Iranian flag with the alef character , representing the first letter of the word Ayatollah .

Some Iranian newspapers avoided mentioning the character , presumably to avoid offending Iran 's clerical rulers . On March 2009 , Javad Shamaqdari , cultural adviser to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad , demanded an apology from a delegation of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and

Sciences actors and producers visiting Iran for what he characterized as negative and unfair portrayals of the Islamic republic in *The Wrestler* and other Hollywood films .

The question of who had designed 40 ballet costumes for Portman and the dancers in *Black Swan* was one publicized controversy related to the film . The media gave substantial coverage to the dance double controversy : how much credit for the dancing in the film was being given to Portman and how much to her " dance double " , Sarah Lane , an American Ballet Theatre soloist . Lane claimed to have danced more than she was credited . The director and Fox Searchlight disputed Lane 's claim . Their released statements said , " We were fortunate to have Sarah there to cover the more complicated dance sequences and we have nothing but praise for the hard work she did . However , Natalie herself did most of the dancing featured in the final film . "

Aronofsky said in an interview with *Entertainment Weekly* :

" I had my editor count shots . There are 139 dance shots in the film . 111 are Natalie Portman untouched . 28 are her dance double Sarah Lane . If you do the math , that 's 80 % Natalie Portman . What about duration ? The shots that feature the double are wide shots and rarely play for longer than one second . There are two complicated longer dance sequences that we used face replacement . Even so , if we were judging by time , over 90 % would be Natalie Portman . And to be clear , Natalie did dance en pointe in pointe shoes . If you look at the final shot of the opening prologue , which lasts 85 seconds , and was danced completely by Natalie , she exits the scene on pointe . That is completely her without any digital magic . "

= = Personal life = =

Aronofsky began dating English actress Rachel Weisz in the summer of 2001 , and in 2005 they were engaged . Their son , Henry Chance Aronofsky , was born on May 31 , 2006 , in New York City . The couple resided in the East Village in Manhattan . In November 2010 , Weisz and Aronofsky announced that they had been apart for months , but remain close friends and are committed to raising their son together in New York . In 2012 , he began dating Canadian film and television producer Brandi @-@ Ann Milbradt . They were engaged but separated in 2015 .

He said of his spiritual beliefs in 2014 , " I think I definitely believe . My biggest expression of what I believe is in *The Fountain* " .

In April 2011 , Aronofsky was announced as the President of the Jury for the 68th Venice International Film Festival .

In November 2014 , Aronofsky was announced as the President of the Jury for the 65th Berlin International Film Festival , for February 2015 .

= = = Environmental activism = = =

Aronofsky is known for his environmental activism . In 2014 he traveled to the Alberta Tar Sands with the Sierra Club ' s Michael Brune and Leonardo DiCaprio . In 2015 he traveled to Alaska 's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge with Brune , Kerri Russell , and the leaders of several veterans groups .

He has received the Humanitarian Award from both the Humane Society of the United States and PETA .

In 2015 , he collaborated with the artist JR on ? The Standing March , ? a public art installation in Paris encouraging diplomats at COP21 to take action against climate change .

He is a board member of The Sierra Club Foundation and The School of Field Studies .

= = Filmography = =

= = = Feature films = = =

= = = Unreleased short films = = =

= = = Television = = =

One Strange Rock

= = Accolades = =