

The American Interview with Amsterdam Actor Leon van Waas

by Tina Faye Ayres



Leon van Waas discovered a love of reading at an early age which led him ultimately to become an actor. He has worked alongside Dakota Fanning, Guy Pearce, and Paul Anderson on the film *Brimstone*, which smashed all records last September 2017, at the Netherlands Film Festival by winning 6 Golden Calf Awards,(the Dutch version of the Oscars) an occurrence which had never happened before. He has also played the role of a Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (DD/CIA) in the feature film *Art of Deception*. Leon is also an avid James Dean enthusiast. For more information on his various works see: LeonVanWaas.com

What was it like growing up in a small town in the North of Holland? What did it feel like to discover the worlds held in books? Aside from your love of reading what are some of your most fond memories of your early days?

My most fond memories besides reading, are playing outside in the meadows and cornfields. To go fishing and climb in the trees, to listen to the beautiful silence of my village, especially in the summer and to be in my own world. To discover new places beyond my comfort zone while growing up and to enjoy and to love the animals and nature. Also I remember that when I read books, or watched movies, sometimes I cried because it felt and seemed so real, as if I were into these worlds myself...

What led you to try your hand at working as an actor?

When I walked by this tarot card magician around 2000, named Duco Hünd in The Hague, he foresaw that I could become an actor and that I needed to take acting lessons, which I did after having serious doubts for a long time. I was not that sure of becoming an actor because I hadn't the slightest clue how to become one.



I understand you are also a James Dean enthusiast? How did you first discover him?

In the early days, I had a poster of James Dean in my bedroom, it was an advertisement from a jeans brand and it was only later, when I watched his outstanding work, that I reflected myself as a same kinda authentic rebel, doing my own thing and going my own way.

Did seeing his work on screen and television influence you to take your craft more seriously? Why do you think his work in the field is so timeless?

Yes, his work influenced me very much and he was one of the great inspirators that took me seriously into the world of acting, to grow and to learn from my mistakes and insecurities. I think his work is just brilliant and his personality is timeless, because it is about the youth against the established order and that is going on for such a long time now, I think it's a universal thing. Also his tragic death, with only 3 films, makes him a Legend.



What was it like to work on the film *Brimstone*, what did you learn from that experience?

It was a dream come true! Actually, I did know the director Martin Koolhoven just then and when I coincidentally crossed his path in 2012, we talked about film and later on when I read the news in the media about *Brimstone*, I contacted him again with the question if I could do an audition. So I did and I got the role. I was invited to stay for a couple of days, twice, in between the shooting in a great Berlin hotel and everything was like a trip, to work on this professional set, to discover my character and to explore my international way of working with Martin, Dakota, Guy and Paul and party together, it was super Awesome!



How does the industry in the Netherlands differ most from the movie industry here in the States?

I think in Holland, I will never be acknowledged in my craft as an actor, that's why I believe more in International possibilities

In your recent Los Angeles red carpet screening, in *Art of Deception*, you got to play a Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (DD/CIA) what was that like?

It was like another dream came true, because I always wanted to play a real American character in a real action thriller, Hollywood feature film. Oh and Richard Ryan, the filmmaker, told the audience, at the Q&A right after the red carpet screening at Sony Pictures Studios, that when he first watched my videos back in 2011, that I reminded him of James Dean, now, that's the biggest compliment! Therefore my long time motto is: Dream Reality.

What is the most challenging thing you face in your line of work?

The most challenging thing I face in my line of my work is to find work I can express myself at the very best I can, it's not that I got offered a lot of work, you know. So I have to search for auditions and create a way to show my work around.



Can you tell us a little more about that project?

Yeah sure, I invited the filmmaker, Richard Ryan in 2011 on Facebook and chatted a couple of times about film making and then later on, he asked me to come on over for 3 months in California to play this spectacular part in his film project, so I took a deep dive into the uncertainty and packed my bags to go overseas, destination unknown, for the first time in my life.

What are you hoping to work on next?

I just hope to work on other challenges, to play parts that are hidden within my soul and not yet discovered, to perform better and better, each and every time, to become the character, like a chameleon.

As an actor how do you personally deal with rejection and self doubt? Do you think those are things everyone in the industry must learn to cope with?

I think that is a very important aspect involved with the process of acting. If you can't cope with rejection, or if you are reaching the end of your breath too fast, I think it will be a short way to run... you gotta have faith in yourself and in your skills. The ultimate instrument is our body and our brain and I think you have to make a 10,000 Miles journey, to master the craft properly.

What was the best advice anyone ever gave you?

Never give up, don't be afraid, act in a stage play, or make your own film. Invest!

Do you have a dream role or project you'd most like to bring into being?

Yes, that will be my own written autobiographical novel, ultimately my own written script and feature film, directed by myself!



Is there anything you'd like to say in closing?

First of all, thank you so much for your time! I hope that you enjoyed this interview as much as I did, and let's take care of each other more and not forget about the fauna and flora (the Animal Kingdom and the vegetation) because it's incredible scary to see how we treat each other, the animals and our Mother Nature. We are part of nature and I think everything and everyone is connected and there is only one Planet Earth: our only Home.

