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# Je Veux Voir

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**Peter Bradshaw**  
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Potent and intriguing ... Je Veux Voir

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**Production year:** 2008

**Country:** France

**Directors:** Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige

**Cast:** Catherine Deneuve, Rabih Mroue

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Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige are artists and academics who have here created a dramatised cine-essay, just over an hour long, set in Lebanon, on the Godardian theme of how the cinema can witness history. I should like to see it shown on a double-bill with Philippe Aractingi's 2007 film *Sous les Bombes*, about the Israel-Hezbollah war of 2006. Catherine Deneuve stars, playing a version of herself, as a movie star in a film about Lebanon; she discovers scheduled scenes set in Beirut for which she is not needed, but demands to be taken there anyway - to "see". Once in the city, Deneuve's mythic status confers on her a kind of cultural *laissez-passer*: we see the shattered buildings through her eyes: buildings destroyed by war and their effacement completed by rebuilding programmes. These are scenes of devastation rendered paradoxically invisible by TV news which assumes destruction as a given; when presented as the backdrop to cinematic drama, they come into vivid focus. History is being destroyed, both by war and the longing for reconstructed peace: who will witness the truth of what is happening? The answer is: cinema, perhaps, in the enigmatic form of Deneuve herself. Playing Deneuve's driver, Rabih Mroué has an effective scene in which, rhapsodising about *Belle de Jour*, he almost drives them into a minefield. This is a potent and intriguing cinema of ideas.

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