

NY CULTURE | SEPTEMBER 7, 2010

# A Local Writer Takes the Direct Approach

Email Print Save This Like + More Text

By MICHELLE KUNG

For author-filmmaker Galt Niederhoffer, the release this Friday of her feature directorial debut, "The Romantics," has a slightly surreal quality. She began prepping to shoot her relationship drama—which stars Katie Holmes and Anna Paquin as former schoolmates vying for the affection of the latter's fiancé—a year ago. Only a year before that, she was toasting the publication of her novel of the same name, from which she adapted her film.

"It's pretty efficient work," said Ms. Niederhoffer, who wrapped production last December and then had six weeks to cut a version of the film to premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in January. The movie was subsequently picked up by distributor Paramount Famous, and the 34-year-old filmmaker and mother of two returned to the editing room to produce a new cut that was "shockingly close" to the film she premiered at Sundance. "I've come to feel that the first decision is usually the best decision," she said.



[View Full Image](#)

Getty Images

Galt Niederhoffer's debut feature film is 'The Romantics.'

directing differs from writing and producing.

Ms. Niederhoffer, the daughter of investor Victor Niederhoffer, grew up on the Upper East Side and produced her first feature, the Sundance award-winner "Hurricane Streets," in 1997 after dropping out of Harvard (she returned to finish her degree in 2001). "I've written both of my books before or during my pregnancies and finished them just as I was about to give birth," she said. "These things have a cycle and if you don't seize on the cycle, you miss the boat."

Ms. Niederhoffer spoke with The Journal about her directorial debut, and how

## The Wall Street Journal: How long did it take to adapt your own novel for the big screen?

It was pretty quick. The book was published in the summer of 2008 and out of postpartum depression—out of losing the creative child that is any artistic work—I had to get right into something fast. I started adapting the book that summer. By the winter, we had a working draft that we were sending to actors.

## "The Romantics" is your second book. Why not adapt your first book, "A Taxonomy of Barnacles," into a film?

You can't really explain what draws you to certain subjects or themes, but after I finished that [first] book, it was done in my mind. I was then lucky that the producing team of Suzanne and Jennifer Todd optioned it, and now Amy Lippman has adapted the screenplay. It's been wonderful to watch it grow without me.

## You've been producing films since you were 19. How did you find the transition to directing?

I was euphoric from start to finish. I loved working with my crew and with my actors—it was an incredible high and a beautiful exchange of trust. I'm a mom, and directing actually reminded me more of mothering than it did of producing; the director-actor relationship is very similar to the mother-child relationship, except that the actors often do know best.

**Now that you've directed as well as produced, which do you prefer?**

I'm excited to continue directing, which was truly one of the great moments of my life. I'll always produce—I think of it as my day job, and I do it to pay the bills and exercise a different part of my brain, to keep my artistic impulses in check with my business acumen.

**Katie Holmes, who plays the film's main character, also serves as an executive producer. How did she become involved?**

I'd never met her before, but she felt so strongly about the material that she came aboard as an E.P. I found her to be one of the most impressive and talented women I've ever met, and I've met a lot. Obviously, because she's written about on a daily basis, the paparazzi did invade our set and even blocked shoots. But she was a complete professional about it.

**Write to** Michelle Kung at [michelle.kung@wsj.com](mailto:michelle.kung@wsj.com)

MORE IN [NEW YORK-CULTURE](#)