



FILM: **MEYEROWITZ STORIES**

FDG RATING: 2.7 ☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Noah Baumbach: *Director*  
Dustin Hoffman: *Actor, Harold*  
Ensemble cast

DATE: November 19, 2017

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **MEYEROWITZ STORIES** (*New and Selected*)<sup>1</sup>

The New York upper middle class Meyerowitz family is a menagerie of characters performed by some of our favorite actors and actresses. The relationships are a bit complicated as described in the following summary by a published film critic:

Retired, unsuccessful, sculptor-turned-academic Harold (Dustin Hoffman), and his current (4<sup>th</sup>) wife Maureen (Emma Thompson) want to sell the New York apartment and move upstate. That's upsetting news for Danny (Adam Sandler), whose daughter Eliza (Grace Van Patten) is heading off to college; her departure from the household spells the end of both Danny's marriage and his career as a stay-at-home dad, so he had hoped to lodge with Harold and Maureen for a while. While Danny and his sister Jean (Elizabeth Marvel), both the children of Harold's second wife, have stayed close to their father and taken care of him, Harold has always favored Matthew (Ben Stiller), his son with third wife Julia (Candice Bergen). Matthew has separated himself from Harold both spiritually (he gave up on art to become a successful financial advisor to rock stars and physically (he lives in L.A.), but Harold still dotes on him with the affection and attention he denies his children who are closer at hand.

We meet this dysfunctional family and learn the back story of the siblings as the film flows through 3 chapters. It is their father's art retrospective that brings the siblings together as well as his hospitalization. Past grievances bubble up and we see how Harold's callousness, self-delusion and narcissistic nature along with the different personalities of each of his wives affected the offspring. The film's format adds an element of soft comedy to the exaggerated dysfunction that is at the same time real and a bit familiar.

It's interesting to see the self-delusional trait repeated in Harold's grand-daughter. Aging Harold resents that his work was never recognized; he has deluded himself into thinking he is better than he is. Danny and other family members are encouraging and supportive of Eliza's student films which are somewhat simply pornographic.

We wondered if writer, film maker Baumbach might be using the film as self-therapy possibly projecting some of his own family experiences. Some of us appreciated the humor, poking fun at art, and egotism. Others found the story fragmented and tedious. But the acting was very good especially Emma Thompson who was almost unrecognizable as the wine drinking wife, Maureen and Dustin Hoffman did a superb job at making Harold extremely irritating. We all liked Sigourney Weaver's cameo.

The film doesn't need a big screen, so the fact that it is only available for streaming from Netflix, didn't degrade the viewing experience. We kind of felt the same way about the film as Harold's public did about his art. See it or skip it. Our scores ranged from 2 to a lonely 4 averaging out to an unenthusiastic 2.7 on a scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!

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[Film Discussion Group](#) (FDG) organizer