

PRO CATALOGUE

DARKROOM PROJECTS



55TH INTERNATIONAL FILM  FESTIVAL ROTTERDAM 29/1-8/2 2026

Darkroom Projects

29 January - 8 February 2026

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INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM

DARKROOM



9 feature works-in-progress form the fourth edition of the Darkroom work-in-progress platform.

Darkroom offers a platform for the international industry to access exclusive previews of recently or nearly completed films seeking completion or gap funding, sales agents and festival selections. Selected teams receive expert consultancy tailored to their final phases and have the chance to present their work to an exclusive audience of industry professionals both in a presentation and during one-to-one meetings.

Each project has either an attached Rotterdam Lab graduate producer or received previous support from CineMart or the Hubert Bals Fund.

Amor es el monstruo

Love Is the Monster

Neto Villalobos

In the heart of a tropical dystopia and aware that she doesn't have much time left, a grandmother tries to bond with her 6-year-old granddaughter. After conflicts lead her daughter to forbid contact with the child, she regains trust—until the girl is kidnapped. She must confront prejudice about old age and push her limits to get her back.

Tags: drama, tropical dystopian, thriller, family

Synopsis

"And when I grow up, will you be dead?" That's what your granddaughter will ask you. She'll ask it just minutes before you accidentally lock her in your car. Maybe you were distracted. Or maybe your daughter is right when she says you're getting old. Now you have to explain why you didn't take her home like she asked – and admit you have no idea what to do.

Your daughter will hire a nanny. Not just any nanny – one of those security-nannies who, along with changing diapers and prepping meals, carries an assault rifle slung over her shoulder. You've seen them around more and more. Now your granddaughter has one. Which means, so do you.

You'll want to get your granddaughter a bunny for her birthday. To get rid of the nanny, you'll lock her in a bathroom and sneak off with the girl. That'll be the final straw. They'll forbid you from seeing her. The next day you'll try to go to her party, but your name won't be on the list. They won't let you in. You'll miss her birthday.

Your daughter will forgive you – sort of – and let you take the girl to bingo. At bingo, you'll get a full card. You'll step away for just a moment, and when you return, your granddaughter will be gone. Nowhere in sight. Your daughter will get furious and cut all ties with you, leaving you out of the search to find her entirely.

You won't know how to get your granddaughter back, or who to turn to. But once you're contacted, you'll try to withdraw your savings from the bank, only to be told it's not possible, that the money is tied up in an investment fund. Back in the parking lot, in a moment of desperation, you'll make a rash decision: you'll kidnap two children, hoping their mother will lend you the money. You just want your granddaughter back. You'll return the boys the moment your granddaughter is safe. But things will spiral.

Director's Statement

A few years ago, I lost the person I loved most: my mother. She was a strong woman who always fought for what she believed in, but as time went on, she began to struggle with everyday life. Solving simple problems became a challenge and she grew more insecure. Her reasons for moving forward changed over the years, until, upon discovering she was ill, she found in her granddaughter the strength to keep fighting. This experience raises the question that drives this film: How far would you be willing to go when someone you love is in danger? This feature film not only explores that question but also examines



the condition of the elderly in our society, family relationships, class polarisation and a pervasive urban insecurity that has given rise to widespread paranoia. It is the portrait of a tropical dystopia – one that, sadly, does not feel so distant or improbable. Old age and urban violence are increasingly urgent issues, and I believe their depiction in cinema should be bold, challenging and provocative. After directing two comedies, I now feel the need to explore a more dramatic register – a story that reflects my current emotional state while simultaneously unsettling, questioning and keeping the audience on edge. *Amor es el monstruo* is a thriller and a family drama, a story about love and despair in an increasingly hostile world. It is a genre film infused with the necessary elements to convey the anguish of a reality that feels all too close, even if we refuse to acknowledge it. In my third feature film, I want to create a realistic, slow-burning and violent approach, exploring the moral dilemma of a grandmother willing to do whatever it takes to protect her granddaughter, regardless of the consequences. I seek to create an art house film that also resonates with a broad audience. I want viewers to understand and be confronted by the main character's decisions – her contradictions, her virtues and her flaws. Because, in the end, this is a story about complex human beings, navigating a world where inequality has spiralled out of control and violence has become a means of survival. I believe cinema is a mirror that not only reflects who we are but also anticipates where we might be headed. It is essential to speak about the uncomfortable, to confront what we avoid looking at, in order to generate a necessary and urgent dialogue. Because only by facing our reality can we begin to question it – and perhaps, change it.

Director's Biography

Neto Villalobos Brenes graduated in Sociology from the University of Costa Rica and later studied Film Directing at the Centre d'Estudis Cinematogràfics de Catalunya. He has taken part in programs such as the Berlinale Talent Campus, the Rotterdam Lab, and the "How to Tell a Story" workshop led by Gabriel García Márquez. His first

feature, *Por las Plumas* (2013) premiered at the TIFF and later screened at SSIFF, BAFICI, IFFR, Miami and Toulouse. His second feature, *Cascos Indomables* (2018), was written during a residency at the Cinéfondation and also premiered in TIFF. He co-directed *El Gran Líbano* (2017), which opened Directors' Fortnight as part of the Lebanon Factory. He is currently developing the experimental documentary *Jamón*, supported by the TFI Latin American Fund. His most recent short, *Amor es el monstruo* (2022) won the Audience Award at the Shnit Festival. This is also the title of his third feature, an international co-production now in post-production, supported by Ibermedia, DAFO, and Panama's national fund, and Darkroom 2026.

Company Profile

Company established in Chile and Spain, dedicated to international co-production and to building a bridge between Latin America and Europe. We develop auteur-driven projects with strong audience appeal, constantly seeking creators and stories that expand cinematic form. Our films have been recognised at major festivals such as Cannes, Venice, San Sebastián, PÖFF, IFFR, and FICG, among others.

Current Status

The film is currently in its third edit cut, and we are looking to bring a new editor to collaborate closely with the director. As we participate in Darkroom in Rotterdam, we are seeking international funds, in-kind services, and industry partnerships to complete the remaining stages. Our goal is to secure this financing soon and finalise the film in the first half of 2026.

I want viewers to be confronted by the main character's decisions – her contradictions, her virtues and her flaws. Because, in the end, this is a story about complex human beings, navigating a world where inequality has spiralled out of control and violence has become a means of survival.

Goals at Darkroom

At Darkroom, our goal is to present the film at a key moment in its creative process and to strengthen the film's international network as we enter the final phase of editing and post-production. We aim to connect with potential co-financiers and post-production partners, and to meet sales agents, distributors and festival programmers to position the film within the global festival circuit and prepare its worldwide commercial release.

Previous Work available on Festival Scope

The film *All About the Feathers* (2013) by Neto Villalobos is available on Festival Scope.



Neto Villalobos, Director



Clara Larrain, Co-Producer

Feature: Digital | 96 min. | Colour
Based on: Original screenplay by Neto Villalobos and Diego Vanderlaat
Genre: Fiction
Languages: Spanish
Locations: Golfito, Costa Rica
Budget: €700,000
Financing needed: €159,518
Production Company: La Sucia Centroamericana
Co-Production Companies: Clara Films, Cine Infinito, Expansiva Cine
Current Status: Fine cut
Final steps to complete the film: Image post-production, colour grading, sound design and mixing, original music, graphic and narrative design elements, subtitles, final deliveries
Partners attached: La Sucia Centroamericana €174,145
 DAFO Fund €90,720
 El Fauno Fund €88,945
 DICINE Fund €69,000
 Ibermedia Fund €64,400
 Clara Films €23,832
 Cine Infinito €15,640
 Expansiva Cine €13,800
Seeking partners from: Worldwide

Contact

Clara Films
hola@clarafilms.cl
www.clarafilms.cl

Làstima

Mario Piredda

Vera, an unemployed Romanian woman in her forties, is tasked with accompanying Kali, a young Nigerian girl, from one city to another. What begins as a simple one-day assignment becomes a lifelong journey across a sun-scorched Sardinia.

Tags: roadmovie, women, sisterhood

Synopsis

Vera, 41 year-old, Romanian, has been living in Sardinia for a long time. She works as a caregiver in a small provincial town and when the elderly woman she looks after dies, she loses her home and her job all of a sudden. She has no alternative than asking Sorin, a shady fellow countryman who has resurfaced from her past, for help: he actually is looking for a trusted person for a job, so he agrees to host Vera. The task is apparently simple: she has to pick up Kali, a 21-year-old girl from Nigeria, from a train station in Sassari, and bring her to him, in Cagliari. But during a train stop Kali escapes and Vera has to chase her. Their journey starts, fighting and opening up to each other, eventually finding a common ground between the depths and the beauty of a sun-scorched Island.

Director's Statement

Two women – Olimpia Melinte, acclaimed Romanian actress, and Cynthia Atekie, a young Nigerian-born non-professional actress making her on-screen debut – one journey across a sun-scorched Sardinia, endless possibilities of being human. "Làstima" is a word in the Sardinian language that carries the weight of the island's linguistic and cultural stratification, marking that fragile border between original sin and compassion.

Vera and Kali meet by chance through one of the many violent, vulgar men they've encountered in their lives. It is because of him – or perhaps thanks to him – that their wandering begins: on trains, buses and makeshift cars, crossing on foot an island that isolates and rarely lets you leave its borders, especially if you've just arrived, if you are a foreigner. They give voice to characters living on the edges of society, united in their stubborn opposition to their fate.

It is a contemporary story with no winners or losers. The characters step into each other's shoes, and we watch them before and as they get dressed, with no judgment. The film unfolds between two cities and their outskirts, in the countryside of my homeland, where Sardinians, the sons of Sardinians, must learn to open up to one another. That's who we are: we hide behind our fists because we can't bear the heart's own speed, but when we finally calm down, we open it wide.

Vera and Kali are 'the others,' and through their eyes, the film takes shape, the places emerge and the cultural boundaries collide at full speed.

Director's Biography

Mario Piredda was born in Badesi, Sardinia. He has been living in Bologna since 1999, where he began working as a director. In 2016, he won the David di Donatello award for best short film with *A casa mia* (At My Home), produced by Articulture and distributed at over 100 festivals worldwide. His first feature film, *L'Agnello* (The Lamb), produced by Articulture and RAI Cinema, distributed worldwide by



TVCO, premiered in competition at the 2019 Rome Film Festival - Alice nella città section (where it won a special mention for best female debut by Nora Stassi) and was selected, among others, at international festivals in Istanbul, Moscow, CineMed, Prague, CPH Buster, Denver, Lucas Film Frankfurt, and Cinemagic UK. It won the Annecy Cinéma Italien 2020 festival (Best Film, Youth Jury Award, Audience Award), while the screenplay received the Italian prestigious Suso Cecchi d'Amico Award, dedicated to the best original work with a female main character. The lead actress, Nora Stassi, won the Golden Globe for Best Newcomer 2021, and the film was shortlisted for Best Directing. It is available on Rai Play and Netflix Europe. *Làstima* is his second feature film.

Company Profile

Articulture is an Italian independent production company focused on arthouse cinema with impact-producing potential. Since 2009, we have released 12 fiction and documentary films, which address cultural issues and engage real communities without compromising international breadth. We work in "the border" symbolic space: a land of conflict and mediation that nurtures concrete social change.

Current Status

On 25 October, *Làstima* completed its six weeks of shooting across desert plains, hidden beaches, winding inland roads and quiet suburbs of Sardinia Island. Editing began immediately afterwards, and the first rough cut will be available by the end of December. It will be ready for festival submission by mid-March 2026.

Goals at Darkroom

We expect to gather industry feedback on the rough cut and together assess the film's market potential. We want to close a deal with a sales agent with whom we can plan and push the festival strategy as soon as possible, raising awareness among programmers, and start identifying distributors interested in the territories of origin (Italy and Switzerland) and the film's primary markets of interest (France, Spain, Germany, Romania, Central Europe).

|| Vera and Kali are 'the others', and through their eyes, the film takes shape, the places emerge and the cultural boundaries collide at full speed.

Previous Work available on Festival Scope

The film *The Lamb* (2019) by Mario Piredda is available on Festival Scope.



Mario Piredda,
Director



Chiara Galloni,
Producer

Feature: Digital | 100 min. | Colour

Based on: Original screenplay by Mario Piredda

Genre: Fiction

Languages: Italian, Sardinian, Romanian, Pidgin English

Locations: Sardinia

Budget: €1,650,000

Financing needed: €150,000

Production Company:

Articulture

Co-Production Company:

Dok Mobile

Current Status: Rough cut

Final steps to complete the film:

Final editing, original soundtrack, audio mix, colour grading, VFX and marketing tools

Partners attached:

Italian Ministry of Culture €558,900

Sardinian Region €288,300

Sardegna Film Commission

€181,300

PICS (Film Investment Refund

Switzerland) €101,000

RSI - Radio Television Switzerland

€84,800

Office Fédéral de la Culture

Switzerland €217,300

Creative Europe Media Slate

€45,000

Cineforum €21,730

Seeking partners from:

Italy and Switzerland, France, Spain, Germany, Romania, Central Europe + Worldwide

Contact

Articulture

chiara.galloni@articulture.it

<https://www.articulture.it/>

LFD Hope

Joshua Loftin

LFD Hope is a requiem for a city and a hymn for its forgotten souls – a film about men learning to speak in a world that taught them to stay silent. Through intimate, symbolic encounters, their lives reflect one another and London bears silent witness to pain, confession and the quiet emergence of hope.

Tags: docu fiction, mental health, magical realism

Synopsis

For over a decade, *LFD Hope* has been growing in London's margins, gathering life, stories and silences. Real people, found on the streets, became characters in symbolic, choreographed scenes, playing versions of themselves but filtered through loss, longing and honesty. One shared anatomy of vulnerability through five tales – a city's hidden fractures, voiced by its men who carry mental illness like a secret tattoo in a macho world that demands their silence.

London stands as both stage and evidence. Its towers, empty windows and gaps between buildings become psalms of isolation and yearning. Across this landscape moves an omniscient spirit and his antithesis, the Businessman, gathering five lives so their echoes form a chorus of truth. The city mirrors their inner worlds, its architecture reflecting their states of mind. Its voice threads the film together, transforming suffering into connection, solitude into communion and silence into the faint sound of redemption. The spirit does not judge or explain; it bears witness of the other characters: Mason, haunted by his mother's death, waits for an alien ship to carry him to peace. Harry and Kris, two skaters, fight despair through play, reinventing freedom in motion. Mark, a man with learning difficulties, lives with the wonder and directness the city has forgotten. Matthew (Michael Balogun), a gun-runner who operates in the underworld of the streets, discovers redemption through family and a newfound vulnerability. Alan, a phone salesman by day and a shaman by night, channels the city's collective neurosis through his search for spiritual release.

Though their paths never fully cross, each man reflects the others: fragments of the same broken mirror. Their struggles – grief, isolation, addiction, self-delusion, faith – echo one another through the architecture of London itself. Through these five lives, we experience one story: that of men walking toward honesty in their inner darkness, of a city that doesn't see them until they speak; of strength born from confession. *LFD Hope* is not an anthology, it is a single poem in five parts. The city is the chorus, the characters its verses. And in the silence between, we find hope.

Director's Statement

LFD Hope explores the quiet yet profound journeys of psychological re-evaluation, revealing both the beauty and the chaos within lives often overlooked by society. In Britain, we still struggle to face the realities of poverty and mental health; this silence creates deep and lasting wounds. Growing up on a London council estate, I experienced these tensions firsthand within my own family.

As a young man, I questioned why I felt inadequate and mistrustful of a world that seemed to have no place for me. Over time, I found strength and clarity through the wisdom of friends and collaborators who guided my own healing. Over the past ten years, I have immersed myself in the lives of my contributors – sharing their homes, listening to their stories, and witnessing their humour and pain. These relationships, built on sincerity and trust, allowed the film to emerge naturally from our shared experiences over the last 12 years.

I wanted *LFD Hope* to be sincere but never solemn – to reflect life's duality, where darkness and humour coexist. When things grow too heavy, absurdity often follows. In that rhythm of contradiction lies the possibility of healing.

Unlike my earlier fictional work, where I created characters and then searched for actors to embody them, *LFD Hope* evolved from the real lives of its protagonists. Their narratives intertwined with mine, blending truth and imagination in equal measure.

The film began as an act of survival. When life comes to a standstill, you can no longer look away – you must face the fear, the sadness, and the absurdity, and allow meaning to take shape. Through filmmaking, pain became recognition and recognition became connection.

I wanted *LFD Hope* to be sincere but never solemn – to reflect life's duality, where darkness and humour coexist. When things grow too heavy, absurdity often follows. In that rhythm of contradiction lies the possibility of healing.

London itself becomes a character – vast, indifferent, haunted. Its empty towers and tunnels reflect the psychic states of its inhabitants, echoing the chiaroscuro of Pedro Costa's Lisbon, the interior stillness of Béla Tarr's domestic purgatories, and the observational tenderness of Gianfranco Rosi's Rome. Like those films, *LFD Hope* dissolves the border between realism and poetry, between documentary evidence and spiritual allegory.

I need to be close to the characters, to put them centre in the frame, this is why I intend to shoot in 4:3. I don't care about the landscape, it's just where they are. London is only London because of them, because of anyone, not anything.

Shot with lo-fi intimacy, the film refuses cinematic polish. Its raw texture mirrors the fragility of its subjects; its rhythm, slow and musical, allows the city's hidden pulse to surface. What connects these lives is not plot but presence – a shared rhythm of endurance, where small acts of honesty become moments of transcendence. We see into rooms where light is partial, shadows linger, the atmosphere is raw. The camera does not impose beauty everywhere, but sometimes beauty slips through cracks – an unsent letter, a tremor in a voice, the horizon glimpsed above rooftops.

Ultimately, *LFD Hope* is a requiem for a city and a hymn for its forgotten souls – a film about men learning to speak in a world that taught them to stay silent. It is one story told in five movements: a single breath of hope carried through the dark.

Director's Biography

Joshua Loftin was born in south east London, and went on to study Film Production at the Edinburgh College of Art. Whilst there, he edited *Should We Go Home* (2009) by Nelson Carlos, which won a BAFTA New Talent Award. In 2010, Joshua was nominated for a BAFTA New Talent Award. Upon graduating Joshua went on to direct his self funded debut feature film, *I can't be Kaspar?* (2012) before beginning work on developing *LFD Hope* in 2013, project in which he worked for 11 years and is supported by Darkroom 2026. Alongside this he has worked within the film industry from an assistant director to directing indie music videos, for fellow artists. As well as working within the film industry, Joshua has also had a successful career in music releasing the album "positive mental health music" with his band Tiña.

Company Profile

Gallivant Film is an award-winning London–Budapest company making human-focused, socially and environmentally-driven documentaries and creative commercial work. Its features *Another News Story*, *Granny Project*, *KIX*, *Another Land* won awards and screened at major festivals. Founded in 2015, it's now producing work for HBO, ARTE and Doc Society to name a few.

Current Status

Following the completion of this final production phase, director Joshua Loftin began the extensive process of logging and reviewing all footage captured across the past decade. Then in October 2025, Joshua travelled to Budapest to commence work with editor Anna Vaghy, marking the beginning of the film's dedicated editing phase. Together, they will work together for the remainder of the year to refine the film's structure and tone, with the goal of achieving picture lock in early 2026.

Goals at Darkroom

During the programme, we'll connect with co-producers, financiers, consultants and festival curators to support the final post-production of *LFD Hope* and shape our 2027 release plan. We'll also fundraise for editing, licensing, grading, sound and deliverables, while using workshops and meetings to refine our release strategy. Key to our participation is discussing the film's themes like non-actors, ethics and urban mental health and to strengthen its global relevance.



Joshua Loftin, Director



Balint Revesz, Producer



Anna Vaghy, Editor

Feature: Digital | 80 min. | Colour
Based on: Original screenplay by Joshua Loftin
Genre: Hybrid, Creative Documentary
Languages: English
Locations: London
Budget: €287,500
Financing needed: €154,100
Production Companies: Gallivant Film, Sea Fox Films, Lorenz Films
Co-Production Company: Good Kids productions
Current Status: Rough cut
Final steps to complete the film: Financial support to cover costs associated with the latter edit, post-picture finishing, sound design, score and mastering
Partners attached: Private Equity €42,550
 Crowd Funding €28,750
 Hungarian Film Office - Tax Incentive €28,750
 Post-production services €28,750
 Filmjus Foundation €1,150
Seeking partners from: Europe, United Kingdom, United States

Contact

Gallivant Film
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<http://www.gallivantfilm.com/>



Marina

Laís Santos Araújo, Pethrus Tibúrcio

Trying to feel loved, a teenage girl makes two worlds tragically collide during her 15-year-old birthday party.

Tags: tragedy, teen romance, coming of age

Synopsis

The daughter of a white military police officer and a black touristic guide, Marina attends a private school where she dates the wealthy Henrique in secret, since he prefers it that way. Excluded, Marina dreams of having a debutante party like the ones she is never invited to, and of dancing with Henrique in front of everyone. To save money, Marina has her dress made by a seamstress in the outskirts and becomes involved with her son, Pedro. They develop a vibrant, secret romance, and with him Marina starts sneaking out to dangerous areas of Maceió, where disappearances, murders and police raids are frequent. Although in love, she prefers to keep Pedro hidden, and to maintain her relationship with her school boyfriend as well. She hides the romance until the day she is exposed, which brings her family, emotional life and school life into a crisis. On the night of the party, most of her classmates do not show up. Pedro does, but the night ends very differently from what she imagined.

Directors' Statement

We co-directed *Marina* in the beginning of 2025, after 15 years of friendship and creative collaboration. We wanted to create a film that reflects the way we grew up – somewhat protected in North-eastern Brazilian cities that were considered very violent to a part of its population. We wanted to reflect on the fact that living your own life is unavoidable even when surrounded by terrors, and that a part of coming-of-age in unequal places is to be aware of, or to be a part of, the pain around you.

A very central point in our perspective as directors, which guided all our creative and aesthetic decisions, was to build a gaze on adolescence that would not minimise this stage of life, but rather approach them with the seriousness and importance they hold at the moment we are living through them. In *Marina*, the desires of a 15-year-old girl – to have a fancy and popular birthday party, to use drugs and be seen as cool at school, to be considered beautiful and to have sex for the first time like in a fairy tale – are the driving forces of the story, worthy of being looked at with respect and affection.

In the film, these youthful, everyday experiences are closely intertwined with broader themes such as structural violence, class difference and racial inequality. Featuring characters who are diverse in geography, race and social background, we aimed to portray them honestly – to represent people in all their moral and ethical complexity. While it was important for the film not to criminalise Black characters and to highlight urban violence in Brazil as an issue deeply tied to race, it was just as essential that our gaze toward the characters avoided both idealisation and vilification. We wanted to move away from simplistic or one-dimensional portrayals, embracing instead the nuanced contradictions that make people who they are.



Marina experiences all of this in the beautiful, tropical city of Maceió. Through the locations we chose for the shoot, we placed our protagonist both in the city's most beautiful and tourist areas and in its most distant, overlooked neighbourhoods – often seen as dangerous – in order to visually build this very familiar experience of growing up in a so-called paradise, a place where people come to spend their vacations, only to later realise it is marked by deep inequality and social violence. Together with Marina, we trace the journey of discovering another Maceió. Through Pedro, her love interest in the story, the girl is led to explore parts of the city she had never been allowed to visit. Alongside her emotional journey, as she transforms and matures, the landscape around her also changes. The character's openness to life and new experiences is mirrored in our creative choices, allowing the film to evolve aesthetically alongside Marina: we move from a walled, enclosed, supposedly protected Maceió to a new vision of the city, beyond the limits of where she was once permitted to go.

The more of Maceió she experiences, and the more exhilarated and alive she becomes on these journeys, the more vibrant our cinematography and editing grow. It is essential that the audience can feel, alongside her, the thrilling sensation being a teenager encountering the world for the first time.

Directors' Biography

Laís Santos Araújo (1993, Brazil) is a director and screenwriter from Alagoas, Brazil. Her work focuses on narratives with morally ambiguous characters, exploring femininity and violence. She's currently a part of the Festival de Cannes' 50th Residence, in Paris. In 2025, she co-directed her first feature film, *Marina*, which received Hubert Bals Fund support and is currently in post-production with the support of Darkroom 2026. Her short film *Infantaria* (2024) won Best Film at the 73rd Berlinale,

and her short *Sometimes We're The Same Height* premiered at IFFR 2019.

Pethrus Tibúrcio is a non-binary filmmaker based in northeastern Brazil. They directed the short film *Tell Her What Happened to Me* (2025), which premiered at the IFFR and received awards at its national premiere and won the best screenplay award from Projeto Paradiso and was selected for the Em Curta editing lab. Over the past decade, they have worked as an assistant director on more than thirty films, collaborating with renowned Brazilian filmmakers such as Kleber Mendonça Filho, Karim Aïnouz, and Marcelo Gomes. In 2024, they took part in Berlinale Talents Rio with their research project *Tela Trans*, an archive dedicated to mapping all scripted and directed audiovisual works by trans creators in Brazil. Pethrus directed the short documentary *We Won't Lose Weight* (2016) and co-directed *Wednesday* (2014). They are one of the filmmakers selected for Darkroom 2026.

Company Profile

Aguda Cinema is a production company from Alagoas, Brazil, focused on bold, auteur-driven stories from emerging North-eastern voices. Its first feature, *Marina*, was shot in 2025 with support from the Hubert Bals Fund. In 2023, its short *Infantaria* won Best Film at the Berlinale (Generation 14plus). The company now develops two features: *Love is Love* and *Infantaria*.

|| The more of Maceió [the protagonist Marina] experiences, and the more exhilarated and alive she becomes on these journeys, the more vibrant our cinematography and editing grow.

Current Status

Currently, we are at the beginning of the post-production with the editing being made by Tomas Von Osten, we estimate that by mid-December or early January it shall reach the picture locked cut of the film.

Goals at Darkroom

We are seeking funding or potential investors to close the remaining financial gap. We are also keen to connect with international sales agents, distributors and festival programmers.

Previous Works available on Festival Scope

The short films *Infantry* (2022) by Laís Santos Araújo and *Tell her what happened to me* (2025) by Pethrus Tibúrcio are available on Festival Scope.



Laís Santos Araújo,
Director



Pethrus Tibúrcio,
Director



Pedro Krull,
Producer

Feature: Digital | 120 min. | Colour

Based on: Original screenplay by Laís Santos Araújo

Genre: Fiction

Languages: Brazilian Portuguese

Locations: Maceió, Alagoas, Brazil

Budget: €530,000

Financing needed: €80,000

Production Company:

Aguda Cinema

Co-Production Company:

Carnaval Filmes

Current Status: Rough cut

Final steps to complete the film:

Post-production, finishing funds, colour grading, sound design, sound editing and mixing, and marketing

Partners attached:

Imovision (National Distribution)

FSA/ ANCINE

HBF Development Fund

Seeking partners from:

Europe

Sea, Star, Woman

Mer, étoile, femme

Jeunghae Yim

All I have of my mother are photos with holes cut out of them where her face had been. And a fleeting memory, that of a fallen woman fleeing her country, South Korea, for the United States, leaving her two children behind. I return to the country I chose to leave, Korea, to find meaning in my mother's deleted image.

Tags: drama, family, women

Synopsis

My mother disappeared from my life when I was seven. Soon after, another woman came to live with us. My brother and I called her "Mum". My name was changed, we moved to a new neighbourhood, and I enrolled in a new school. My mother was never to be talked about except as a woman of little virtue who had abandoned her children. I could only stare at holes cut out of family photos, knowing it was her. I ended up forgetting her, as if she had never existed.

My mother reappeared in my life when I was twenty-two; she had become an American professional golfer. We met once in Virginia, the US, where she now lived. Sadly, she passed away a year later, before we had time to truly reconnect. I then left Korea too without ever questioning my mother's image or the absence of her image. Years later, now living in France, I suddenly started having vertigo attacks that prevented me from working. It turned out my brain was deleting one of my two eyes' images instead of merging them together, causing the dizziness. As my world spun, my thoughts returned to the blind spot in my existence: my mother.

In this film, I depart for my mother's two countries to find meaning in her deleted image and begin to recreate a portrait of her.

In Korea, my mother's family, friends and colleagues tell me stories I have never heard before: that my father accused my mother of adultery, which was a crime in Korea until 2015; that she was sent to prison and had to resign from her job as a secondary school teacher; that she had nowhere to live and found little or no support from her family, some of whom volunteered to testify against her in court. I then learn how losing her impossible battle to remain our mother led her to emigrate to the US, forgotten by those she loved.

I find myself wondering what it meant to be branded an ill-reputed woman and shunned by Korean society in the '90s. And yet, despite the tragedy of my mother's story, I hope to go beyond it – to confront the prejudices, fears, and taboos that shaped it – and to move toward reconciliation with my family, with my past, and with the image I hold of her.

Director's Statement

What form should I choose to tell my mother's story, her holes, her absence?

By facing the uncertainties and silences in my present, and the emerging, contradictory stories of her past, I want to understand how law, convention and intimate decisions combined to erase a woman, a daughter, a wife, a mother, a teacher, and a Korean citizen. Yet, my mother's absence will only be a starting point. The film will be



a way to save her from oblivion by going in search of the traces she left behind. As I try to piece together a picture of her, I will gather precious yet sometimes contradictory recollections from individuals, objects and places that hold memories of her in Korea and the US, her adoptive country.

■ I will playfully weave together different cinematic forms – archival footage, portraits, and re-enacted childhood memories – allowing my mother to gradually re-appear – not as a fixed truth or solved mystery, but as a shifting, resonant presence.

Navigating these fragile recollections, I realise part of her story will always inhabit an intangible space between memory and fact, tale and reality. For me, Korea is a place where I was encouraged to forget my past, a place of personal amnesia. To break that process and embrace the porosity between lived experience and its perpetual reconstruction in people's memory, I would like to explore my own intimate memories of my mother from my childhood. I want to return to the moment when my mother disappeared, when I was seven years old, and recreate with actors her departure and my father's reaction. Using this "visual laboratory" of my buried sensations, I hope to excavate the memory-images that remain with me of this pivotal moment and probe their different interpretations through the very process of making them visible on camera.

This will finally allow a space and time where differing views of my mother's story can coexist, and where I can have an impossible conversation with my mother but also with my father, who, whether because of personal convictions or social conventions, is unable to re-evaluate the events of the past.

By conjuring up these images, my mother's story will have a new role in the present and even the future which fills me with hope and also great responsibility. My mother's exile was shaped not only by an unjust law,

but by the society around her that ended up branding her an ill-reputed woman. This convergence of legal, political, and social forces exposes how women can be erased long before they disappear, making her struggle both deeply personal and universally political. Beginning as a personal sound and image scrapbook of fragmentary truths and improbable situations, I will playfully weave together different cinematic forms – archival footage, portraits, and re-enacted childhood memories – allowing my mother to gradually re-appear – not as a fixed truth or solved mystery, but as a shifting, resonant presence.

Director's Biography

Jeunghae Yim is a Paris-based Korean artist and filmmaker, who studied Fine Arts at Hongik University (Seoul), l'École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts Villa Arson (Nice) and Chelsea College of Arts (London), and graduated in film at Paris 8 University. She has exhibited in Seoul, London, Paris and Monaco. Her short, *Entre Chien et Loup* (2019, short doc) screened at FIDMarseille, Jeonju IFF, Cinémathèque Française, Lyon Biennale and Seoul National Modern and Contemporary Art Museum. She was artistic advisor on *Return to Seoul* by Davy Chou (2022). Her project *Sea, Star, Woman* is selected for Darkroom 2026.

Company Profile

Our films are shaped by singular voices: Camilo Restrepo's *Los Conductos* (Best First Film, Berlinale); Pascal Tagnati's *A Corsican Summer* (Jury Award Tiger Competition, Rotterdam); Elisabeth Subrin's *Maria Schneider, 1983* (Directors' Fortnight, César); Lora Mure Ravaud's *Euridice, Euridice* (Pardino d'Oro, Locarno); Isabel Pagliai's *Fantasy* (Best First Film, FID); and Anouk Moyaux's *Selegna Sol* (Best First Film, Cinéma du Réel).

Current Status

After several shoots over a two-year period in France, Korea, and the United States, we have begun editing with experienced editor, Dounia Sichov. We hope to have a first cut in February and a final cut in March.

Goals at Darkroom

Darkroom offers a setting in which to discuss the film with industry partners at a crucial moment for our project. We would like to meet potential distributors (national), broadcasters and sales agents interested in ambitious creative documentaries with universal appeal. We hope to raise awareness of the project among key festival programmers, and we would also welcome meetings with potential finishing funds.



Jeunghae Yim,
Director



Helen Olive,
Producer



Martin Bertier,
Producer

Feature: Digital | 90 min. | Colour
Based on: Original screenplay by Jeunghae Yim
Genre: Creative Documentary
Languages: French, Korean, English
Locations: Paris, Seoul, Daegu, Washington DC

Budget: €555,933

Financing needed: €130,000

Production Company:

5 à 7 Films

Co-Production Company:

Seesaw Pictures

Current Status: Rough cut

Final steps to complete the film:

Sound editing, mix, colour grading, simple animation (VFX), subtitling and deliveries

Partners attached:

CNC Aide au cinéma du monde

€130,000

CNC Development support €60,000

Normandie Region Production

support €50,000

Sub-ti Award, Torino Feature Lab

KOFIC (Korean Film Council)

€53,000

HI - Docs Pitch €19,000

Busan AND Fund €6,000

Seoul Film Commission €3,500

Korea Film Commissions & Industry

Network (KFCIN) €2,700

Seeking partners from:

Worldwide

Contact

5 à 7 films

contact@5a7films.com

5a7films.com

Stand Up

Mari Sanders

The indecisive Vera (23) loses her autonomy after an accident and must reinvent her life in a wheelchair. Only when she meets Xander (22), who has been in a wheelchair since birth, does she begin to gain a new perspective. Their growing friendship forces Vera to face the dilemma: embrace her limitation or fight to appear as 'normal' as possible.

Tags: drama, coming of age, inclusion

Synopsis

Vera (23) doesn't know what she wants and has plunged herself into a life of clubbing with friends. She's a cheerful tease and the life of the party. She dreams of travelling the world, free from obligations, alone. Her motto is: "Travelling is done alone, or it's a vacation". In an unguarded moment during a night out, Vera gets hit by a truck. She ends up in a wheelchair with a low spinal-cord injury. At the rehabilitation center, it's own eco-system of modified housing, activity center and swimming pool, Vera feels like her life is destroyed. During recovery she meets Xander (22), an aspiring stand-up comedian, who has been in a wheelchair his entire life.

Xander takes Vera under his wing, and Vera meets his group of friends, who all have a physical disability. Vera and Xander seem to fall for each other, but their feelings for each other remain unspoken. To Vera choosing Xander is choosing a life "steeped in disability". Vera moves back in with her parents. Everybody coddles her and it exasperates her. Vera feels like she no longer fits in with her old life.

Xander does make Vera feel welcome in his life. After a 'crip' party, thrown by Xander's friends, they end up in bed together, nerve-wracking for them both. Xander has never had sex before, and Vera isn't sure whether she'll feel anything. During the awkward encounter, all their insecurities come to light. They fail to connect with each other. All Vera's anger and tension come out and she lashes out at Xander. Xander won't put up with this and rides off, hurt.

Her physical therapist at the rehabilitation centre encourages her to choose the things that really matter to her. Vera starts working at her father's bike shop.

When she gets a ride to the city from her mother, Vera lashes out at after being told she should accept the help. She frees herself from the wheelchair van and jumps out when it is standing still.

That night, she decides to visit Xander again. She sees him on a stage at a comedy club. His performance is not going well and Xander returns to his dressing room disillusioned. Vera follows him. Finally, they acknowledge what lies at the core of their struggle. Their conversation ends in a tender kiss. Finally, they feel connected.

Vera decides to go on her long-desired voyage. Xander waves her off and she asks him if he wants to come with her. But Xander reminds her life motto: "Traveling is done alone, or it's a vacation". Finally, Vera's journey can begin.



Director's Statement

In *Stand Up*, I reveal a world that often goes unnoticed. The film explores the lives of young individuals with disabilities, showcasing their challenges, unique youth culture and perspectives on the world. The story delves into the experiences of those born with a disability versus those who acquire it later, examining life both before and after this event. It touches on how it can be an obstacle, and in case of a disability required later in life, a life-changing event.

The central question this film explores is the relationship between identity and disability. To what extent does a disability shape who you are? Is it something you prefer to erase or downplay, as Vera's friends seem to do? Is it something that demands extra care and attention from those around you, as Vera's parents provide? Or is it something you boldly claim and perhaps even overemphasise, as Xander and his friends do? Ultimately, Vera must navigate these perspectives to discover her own answer.

My inspiration for *Stand Up* comes from my personal experiences. Born with a disability and using a wheelchair, I spent my early years in special education. I connected with other young individuals navigating their own paths with disabilities. I too had to embrace my uniqueness, undergoing a process of grieving and coming to terms with being different from the majority.

At the academy of arts, I discovered that this perspective on life opened up an artistic goldmine of possibilities. As a fiction and documentary filmmaker, I have delved into the themes of disability, societal misunderstanding and physical diversity. *Stand Up* dives into a deeply poetic exploration of life with a disability. I believe that in a fiction film with documentary elements, I can portray the experience of living with a disability precisely and poetically.

The response of the environment to a person with a disability is also a source of inspiration for me. Since I began exploring the lives of people who acquired a disability later in life, I've learned that almost everyone has experienced the phenomenon of friendships fading quickly. Understandably, many people don't know how to deal with such situations. Choosing the path of least resistance by creating some distance often becomes tempting. As Vera herself puts it, "The disability is, in a way, yours too."

Every actor portraying a character with a disability in the film also has a disability in real life. This deliberate, artistic choice is essential for authentically portraying the colourful world of young individuals with disabilities. Additionally, it enabled us to nurture a relatively overlooked

pool of talents within the film industry. Lucia Zemene in the role of Vera and Daan Buringa for the role of Xander used their personal experiences and unique physicality in a very authentic way.

The inspiration for this group of friends came from multiple sources. In the US and the UK, there are similar 'crip communities'. Such communities existed in the Netherlands as well, particularly in the '80s when disability activism was at its peak. It was a complete 'bunch of outcasts' composed of individuals with diverse backgrounds, ages, genders and styles of clothing. The unifying element was their strong embrace of their disability as an integral part of their identity.

Director's Biography

Mari Sanders (1988) graduated in 2012 from AKV St. Joost in Breda with a bachelor in Audiovisual Design. His graduation film which he directed and wrote was *Rue Des Invalides* (2012) a short about autobiographical elements about a boy in a wheelchair looking for love in wheelchair-hostile Paris. A year after graduating he made the short film *Sync* (2013) within the framework of a Dutch talent development program, the award-winning Youth Film *Go Daan Go* (2014) and his first documentary *80% Disabled* (2017) a comical documentary road movie about the pros and cons of receiving government benefits for being disabled. His work often deals with the reality and nuances of living with disabilities, drawing from his personal experience. His project *Stand Up* is selected for Darkroom 2026.

Company Profile

The Film Kitchen is a female-led production company creating feature films, documentaries and series for national and international audiences. We collaborate with both established and emerging filmmakers to deliver authentic storytelling from original perspectives that explore societal issues and sparks dialogue.

|| *Stand Up* dives into a deeply poetic exploration of life with a disability.

Current Status

Stand Up is fully financed. The film is supported by the Netherlands Film Fund, Creative Europe media, Dutch broadcaster BNNVARA and Greek broadcaster ERT TV, Eurimages and Hellenic Film and Audiovisual Center (HFAC) as well as cash incentives in both countries. Dutch distribution is handled by Gusto Entertainment.

Wrapped shooting in November, shooting in the Netherlands, with one day in Greece for our final scene. Post-production, with exception for music, will take place in Greece with, among others editor Yorgos Mavropsarisidis (*The Lobster, Pour Things*). Picture Lock will be achieved in February, and work on music, sound and VFX will continue throughout February and March. The film will be ready for delivery in May.

Goals at Darkroom

We are actively looking for a sales agent and eager to talk to festival programmers too to establish an international festival premiere in 2026. Expert's feedback on the positioning of the film would be helpful.

We are planning an impact campaign alongside the regular release; we would love to speak to festival programmers about special programmes within festivals as well.



Mari Sanders,
Director



Lisette Kelder,
Producer

Feature: Digital | 90 min. | Colour
Based on: Original screenplay by Mari Sanders
Genre: Fiction
Languages: Dutch
Locations: Netherlands, Greece
Budget: €3,146,252
Production Company:

The Film Kitchen

Co-Production Company:
Neda Film

Current Status: Rough cut
Final steps to complete the film:

Final editing, final music, sound design, colour grading, VFX

Partners attached:

Netherlands Film Fund €1,456,565

Netherlands Film Production

Incentive €712,000

Eurimages € 390,000

Creative Greece - Rebate €212,000

ERT Broadcaster €100,000

BNNVARA Zilveren Film €95,000

Creative Greece - Minority Selective €85,000

Creative Europe Media Slate

€35,000

CoBO Zilveren Film €21,250

Gemeente Rotterdam Local

production support €20,248

Holland Film Market award: €10,000

Seeking partners from:

Worldwide

Contact

The Film Kitchen

lisette@thefilmkitchen.nl

www.thefilmkitchen.nl

Sugar

Amira Duynhouwer

When Chyna's boyfriend Raoul becomes increasingly violent, she decides to pack up their baby Sugar and leave. But he doesn't let her go easily. We follow Chyna, as she breaks free from old patterns, violence and everything she has ever known.

Tags: drama, sisterhood, domestic violence

Synopsis

Sugar is set in and around a vibrant hair salon where Chyna – who is juggling sisterhood, financial pressure and young motherhood – works with her sisters.

She is the neighbourhood's go-to stylist, admired both for her talent and for her relationship with Raoul, the man everyone desires. But behind closed doors, their relationship is far from what it seems. When Raoul becomes increasingly violent, Chyna decides to pack up their baby, Sugar, and leave. But he doesn't let her go easily. We follow Chyna as she breaks free from old patterns, violence and everything she has ever known.

Director's Statement

Sugar is a film about the complicated mechanics of domestic abuse within the relationship between Chyna and Raoul. There is a set pattern of isolation and dependency that precedes femicide and is recurrent in domestic abuse. The misconception that women 'choose' to stay fuels the silence around abuse and is one of the reasons so many still die at the hands of their partners each year. This pattern when viewed day to day seems small and unimportant, but when viewed on the whole turns out to be universal and lethal.

Sugar is set in the South East of Amsterdam, in Chyna's family-owned Black hair salon. Contrary to the subject matter, the film will be colourful and vibrant. Not all tragedy warrants tears. Especially in our culture. We are rarely despondent. We are fighters. Mostly because there is so little room for us to be vulnerable. That's why I chose to tell this story with an all-Black cast, because they deserve every side of themselves seen and represented: when they are fierce, but also when they are not.

With *Sugar* we make an attempt to connect the dots – to show the audience how the day to day adds up to a great, big, awful mess, trapping a young woman in a relationship that might eventually kill her. We connect the dots all the way from childhood, from her parents, to her sisters, to her community, from her past to her present.

Sugar is a celebration of women, a plea for their future, a reminder of their glory.

Director's Biography

Amira Duynhouwer was born in Nairobi and raised in Deventer. She is a writer and a director. Amira directed her own shorts *Kimya* (2019), *Beti* (2020) and *Save It* (2021) and is currently in post production of her first feature film *Sugar* presented at Darkroom 2026. Amira often collaborates with other filmmakers; she co-wrote Jim Taihuttu's *Hardcore Never Dies* (2023), a box office hit in Dutch cinema, and is working on

a new feature film *Wildflowers* set in Kenya with director Teddy Cherim. In the three years since she's graduated Amira has worked in various writers rooms for Videoland, Amazon prime, HBOmax, Viaplay, Netflix and most recently Disney+ for the series *Nemesis*. She likes to move between different genres and formats, finding joy in the puzzle of setting up a fresh story structure.

Company Profile

Studio Ruba is an Amsterdam-based production company founded in 2019 by Layla Meijman and Maarten van der Ven. They aim to move and broaden audiences with innovative stories such as *Kiddo* (Zara Dvinger, Berlinale Generation Kplus, '23), *Idyllic* (Aaron Rookus, IFFR Big Screen, '25) and the minority co-production *To a Land Unknown* (Mahdi Fleifel, Cannes Quinzaine des Cinéastes, '24).

Current Status

We wrapped principal photography on 31 October and are now in the early stages of editing. Our aim is to reach picture lock in the first week of March and to deliver the completed film by the end of May 2026.

Goals at Darkroom

At Darkroom, our goal is to secure a festival premiere, attract an international sales agent and build awareness around the film and the filmmaker. As this is a debut feature, gaining visibility and attention from international partners can be challenging, so an outside perspective would be incredibly valuable.

Previous Work available on Festival Scope

The film *Save It* (2021) by Amira Duynhouwer is available on Festival Scope.

|| With *Sugar* we make an attempt to connect the dots – to show the audience how the day to day adds up to a great, big, awful mess, trapping a young woman in a relationship that might eventually kill her.



Amira Duynhouwer,
Director



Maarten van
der Ven,
Producer



Layla Meijman,
Producer

Feature: Digital | 90 min. | Colour
Based on: Original screenplay by Amira Duynhouwer
Genre: Fiction
Languages: Dutch, Sranan Tongo
Locations: Amsterdam, Bijlmer
Budget: €2,532,670
Production Company: Studio Ruba
Co-Production Company: Mirage Films
Current Status: Rough cut
Final steps to complete the film: Editing and post-production including, colour grading, sound, titles and music
Partners attached: Netherlands Film Fund, Creative Europe Media Slate, Dutch Filmworks Distributor, Flemish Audiovisual Fund, Belgium Tax Shelter
Seeking partners from: Worldwide

Contact

Studio Ruba
layla@studioruba.com
www.studioruba.com

The Hummingbird Paints Fragrant Songs

Èlia Gasull Balada, Matteo Norzi

After a lifetime of hardship, 75-year-old Indigenous artist Sara Flores emerges from the Peruvian Amazon into the global contemporary art scene. As she confronts the emotional and physical toll that comes with being in the spotlight, she defies the lure of material wealth and transforms her art and legacy into a force for the territorial and cultural resistance of the Shipibo Nation.

Tags: indigenous people, contemporary art, environmental activism

Synopsis

Sara Flores is an Indigenous painter from the Peruvian Amazon, one of the last true practitioners of *kené* – the visionary design system of the Shipibo People. Trained in a highly ritualised way within a community founded on ancestral principles of reciprocity, she grew up in a world that no longer exists. After a lifetime without recognition in her own country, Sara – now in her seventies – suddenly finds herself celebrated in the global art world, becoming the first Shipibo artist to exhibit in leading international galleries.

Her newfound success brings both empowerment and disruption. The prices of her paintings skyrocket, lifting her family out of poverty, yet her new status unsettles her sense of balance. Sara wants little for herself, but everyone in her family purchases something, triggering envy among the neighbours. Invited by White Cube to inaugurate her first European solo show and by Christian Dior for a design collaboration, Sara travels between Paris, New York and London, navigating her new reality through exhaustion. A trip to Miami during Art Basel culminates in a glittering Dior party where, Cinderella for one night, she walks in as a star – caught between wonder and alienation.

Back home, her body begins to fail. Doctors offer no answers, and superstition takes hold: during an *ayahuasca* ceremony, a shaman reveals that her malaise has been caused by witchcraft from a jealous neighbour. Moreover, the shaman's visions reveal that Sara's body mirrors the Amazon – itself a dying patient.

Reflecting on mortality and the teachings of her youth, Sara decides to visit her childhood village. In search of plants for her dyes, she finds instead the wounds of deforestation. In a local assembly, she meets the *Guardia Indígena*, a growing movement of land defenders resisting encroachment amid the government's indifference. It's her political awakening.

During another of her trips to New York, Sara brings the leader of the *Guardia* to the United Nations Permanent Forum – the main platform for international diplomacy between Indigenous peoples and nation-states. An idea sparks: what if her art could make the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty visible?

When the most prestigious museum in Lima finally invites her to exhibit, Sara is determined to address the Peruvian State on behalf of her people. She presents a new body of work around the theme of the flag – an emblem of Shipibo sovereignty and a call for unity and autonomy as the only path toward cultural survival.



Directors' Statement

Èlia Gasull Balada:

Throughout my career as a filmmaker, I have focused my work on narratives that underscore deeply-felt themes of trauma, race, inequality and activism in the face of steep odds. My choice stems from respect, admiration, awe and a commitment to dedicate myself to stories that have radically changed the course of societies and humanity at large. I believe in this film because Sara Flores' story has the potential of transforming the course of Indigenous resistance in her own community and the Amazon at large.

My involvement with the Shipibo community started more than 6 years ago, while developing a visual art project in co-creation with a group of Shipibo women that were forcefully sterilised during the Fujimori dictatorship. This film is an evolution of a practice in collectivity and it is also a continuation of a constant exercise in decolonising the mind. To keep following a path that challenges my capacity to unlearn, to become more aware of privilege and biases and to defy the paradigm of endless extraction that has happened in the past. From the smallest encounter to the largest exchange, I challenge myself to explore any interaction from a place of love, gratitude and fairness. This is what master plants teach you when you open yourself to deep work with Shipibo healers. This is also why I'm making this film – to seek transformation through a process that will ultimately make me more empathetic, compassionate, vulnerable and humble. Success for me will be measured by the recognition of my own personal point of view on the human condition by fellow filmmakers – a gaze that I aim to feed by the soul and by the heart.

Matteo Norzi:

I'm interested in the transformative power of art and film as introspective practices that, unfolding, become commitments to propose alternative ways of seeing. Interculturality is my core focus, shaped by a lifetime of travel across diverse geographies and mental landscapes. This journey has grounded an interdisciplinary practice that spans visual art, writing, performance and film. My first major collaboration with the Shipibo People was the feature *Icaros: A Vision* (2016, co-directed with Leonor Caraballo). As the afterlife of that film, I cofounded The Shipibo-Conibo Center (SCC), a non-profit rooted in Indigenous self-determination and territorial sovereignty. SCC operates at the intersection of art, culture and politics, with a mission informed by the Shipibo lifeway, where visual art, music and ethnobotany are inseparable realms. We work

from the belief that Indigenous identity belongs not to a romanticized past, but to a sustainable and technologically engaged future. I align with the notion of the artist as healer – concerned with collective restoration, from environmental struggles to political equality. This current film project bridges my early practice with a decade of community organising and environmental work in the Amazon. It marks a shift away from the cult of authorship toward collaborative, genre-defying approaches aimed at social change. Through years of artistic activism, with many more losses than victories, I've come to see success not as visibility or acclaim, but as the meaning and growth found in the process. Especially in times of crisis, art is how we remind each other what it means to be human.

|| This film is an evolution of a practice in collectivity and it is also a continuation of a constant exercise in decolonising the mind.

Directors' Biography

Èlia Gasull Balada is a visual artist and filmmaker. In 2021, she was listed in the DOC NYC 40 under 40 list and in 2023 she was selected to be part of the Berlinale Talents Summit. Èlia has extensively worked as an editor and writer for documentaries and narratives. Her most recent credits include *The rebellious life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (2022), *The Sit-In* (2020) both screening at Tribeca Film Festival, and *Son of Monarchs* (2020) at Sundance 2021. Her project *The Hummingbird Paints Fragrant Songs* is selected for Darkroom 2026.

Matteo Norzi (1976, Italy) is an artist, filmmaker, writer, and Indigenous rights activist. His debut feature, *Icaros: A Vision* (2016) (co-directed with

Leonor Caraballo), premiered at the 2016 Tribeca Film Festival and was praised internationally. Drawing on years of research and engagement with Amazonian cultures, he co-founded and now directs the Shipibo Conibo Center, the organization that brought Sara Flores's work to the forefront of the international contemporary art scene. His project *The Hummingbird Paints Fragrant Songs* is selected for Darkroom 2026.

Company Profile

The Shipibo Conibo Center is an experiment in art, culture, politics and the afterlife, in the form of a non-profit cultural organisation based in NYC on ancestral Lenape land. It emerged from the film *Icaros: A Vision* to promote and sustain the creative life-ways of the Shipibo People of the Peruvian Amazon in support of their struggle for territorial sovereignty and self-determination.

Current Status

Post-production began in summer 2025 and the project is now in an intensive editing phase. Over the coming months we'll refine the cut through internal and external feedback, aiming for picture lock by April/May 2026. Finishing and final deliverables will follow, with the goal of premiering at a major festival in 2026.

Goals at Darkroom

We are seeking finishing funds to support post-production and delivery, and a sales agent to help shape our festival and market launch strategy. We also seek fresh, critical perspectives from industry mentors and peers, strengthening both the creative and strategic dimensions of the film as we near completion.

Previous Work available on Festival Scope

The film *Icaros: A Vision* (2016) by Matteo Norzi and Leonor Caraballo available on Festival Scope.



Èlia Gasull Balada,
Director, Producer



Matteo Norzi,
Director, Producer



Maria Altamirano,
Producer

Feature: Digital | 100 min. | Colour

Genre: Creative Documentary

Based on: Original screenplay by

Èlia Gasull Balada and Matteo Norzi

Languages: Spanish, Shipibo, English

Locations: Pucallpa and Lima, New York City, Miami, Los Angeles, Paris, London

Budget: €766,450

Financing needed: €300,000

Production Company:

Shipibo Conibo Center

Current Status: Rough cut

Final steps to complete the film:

Post-production and finishing funds

Partners attached:

Shipibo Conibo Center

Private Investors

AJH Doc NYC Prize

Seeking partners from:

Worldwide

The Outside

El exterior

Víctor Moreno

How far can humans go?

Tags: sci-fi, future dystopia, adventure

Synopsis

In the near future, astronaut Ana Lima lives at a space training base in the middle of an arid and desolate landscape on Earth. She is undergoing a long isolation drill to prepare for a possible mission to Mars. At the same time, Ana is receiving treatment to prepare her body for pregnancy in zero gravity. As the weeks go by, the training intensifies and the astronaut is forced to delve deeper into the area where the drill is being conducted: a former site known as the Argus Zone. Lost among the rocky, sandy hills, she encounters a mysterious character. Although, they are unable to communicate verbally, Ana stays by the woman's side in an attempt to find her way back to the base. However, this character

without name transforms the astronaut's perception of her own planet – and her connection to the cosmos.

Director's Statement

Years ago I learned that different space agencies were performing drills for a future settlement on Mars and I started my research about this kind of training. I was trying to find out whether a philosophy of space exploration exists. During my research I was surprised to discover the hard work astronauts must endure; complex goals, competitiveness, testing new technologies and medication on their bodies. I realised their work has nothing to do with the romantic aura of being explorers of new worlds. They are prepared to achieve goals and perform operations as if they were guinea pigs in a great corporation. I pictured a story about one of these simulations in a near future, when landing on Mars will be imminent. *The Outside* questions a value system and at the same time questions our own limits and ambitions as a species.

Director's Biography

Victor Moreno studied film and Philosophy and a master's in Creative Documentary at Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona). He made *The Hidden City* (2018), awarded with the Best documentary film

|| *The Outside* questions a value system and at the same time questions our own limits and ambitions as a species.

in the Feroz awards 2020 and the full-length documentary *Edificio España/The Building* (2012), nominated for best documentary at the GOYA Awards. He has directed other mid-length and short films, such as *The Stone* (2013) and *The Stranger* (2019), which received international awards. His films have been shown internationally, including at IDFA, San Sebastián, Viennale, or Visions du réel, and exhibited at the Lincoln Center, Centre Pompidou, Barbican Centre, and Reina Sofia Museum, amongst others. He also works on video installations, presented in Cineteca Matadero and MIAC (Lanzarote), and teaches at several film schools. He has offered master classes about his films at universities such as La Sorbonne (Paris) and the University of Southern California (Los Angeles). From 2015 to 2017, he was the artistic director of the Muestra de Cine of Lanzarote, Canary Islands. His project *The Outside* is selected for Darkroom 2026

Company Profile

Canary Islands-based production company to produce and co-produce national and international films.

Current Status

We are currently editing the first rough cut and will be finished by the end of January.

Goals at Darkroom

To meet potential sales agent, distributors, broadcasters and investors. Specifically interested in Europe but also America.

Previous Work available on Festival Scope

The film *The Hidden City* (2018) by Victor Moreno is available on Festival Scope.



Victor Moreno,
Director



Silvia Sánchez
Horna, Producer

Feature: Digital | 100 min. | Colour

Based on: Original screenplay by Victor Moreno and Judith Alzola

Genre: Fiction

Languages: Spanish

Locations: Gran Canaria and Fuerteventura

Budget: €1,800,000

Financing needed: €50,000

Production Company:

KV FILMS

Co-Production Companies:

Womack studios,

Transit Transat Films

Current Status: Rough cut

Final steps to complete the film:

Final editing, image post-production,

VFX, sound, post-production

Partners attached:

ICAA €760,000

Canary Government €255,000

Cabildo Tenerife €105,000

RTVC €70,000

Seeking partners from:

Europe and America

Contact

KV Films

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IFFR  **PRO**