

# The New York Times

CRITIC'S PICK

## ‘The Chambermaid’ Review: Amid Luxury, an Entrancing Drudgery

Lila Avilés’s modest and miraculous first feature finds pathos and a hint of magic in the routines of a young hotel worker.



Gabriela Cartol in “The Chambermaid.” Kino Lorber



By A.O. Scott

June 25, 2019



**The Chambermaid**  NYT Critic's Pick | Directed by Lila Avilés | Drama | 1h 42m

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“The Chambermaid,” Lila Avilés’s quietly stunning debut feature, is a work of closely observed workplace realism, but at times it achieves the strangeness and intensity of science fiction. The camera never leaves the high-rise Mexico City hotel where the title character is employed, and in spite of spectacular views from the picture windows, the building can feel as claustrophobic and isolated as a space station drifting in a distant

galaxy. A civilization unto itself, with a rigorous hierarchy and unspoken taboos, the hotel hums with mystery and menace. Even when nothing much is happening, there is the lurking sense that anything might.



The viewer shadows Eve (Gabriela Cartol) through her daily routines, though it isn't entirely clear how many shifts we are witnessing. The job has a way of swallowing up time. As for Eve's life outside of work, all we really know is that she has a 4-year-old son named Ruben. She periodically checks in with him and his caregiver, and sometimes a hint of loneliness or longing passes over her usually stoical features.

Unobtrusiveness, almost to the point of invisibility, is part of Eve's skill set. She passes in and out of mostly empty rooms like a ghost, turning chaos into perfect order. Sometimes the rooms are already haunted, in ways that can be sinister, comical or even sweet. In the first scene, she finds a disoriented man buried in a pile of bedclothes on the floor. Another guest — "a VIP" according to Eve's supervisor — hoards towels, toilet paper and shampoo, demanding "more amenities" on a regular basis. Someone else leaves a single ginkgo leaf on the pillow, which Eve takes as a tip and a token of unspoken affection.

[Avilés](#), who adapted "The Chambermaid" from her own stage play, joins these episodes with a few slender, silvery narrative threads. The plot is a delicate and subtle thing, propelled by a handful of recurring questions. Will Eve win a promotion to a higher, more luxurious floor? Will she be allowed to take home a dress that was left behind by a client?

Those are bureaucratic matters, decided by authorities whose faces we don't see. But there are other, more intimate dimensions to the story. Eve pursues a silent flirtation with a window washer and a guarded friendship with a boisterous fellow room-cleaner known as Minitoy (Teresa Sánchez). A guest from Argentina, stuck in a suite with a demanding baby, hires Eve for short-term, off-the-books child care. This woman's friendliness both bridges the gulf in status between them and reveals how wide and deep it is.

Because of Eve's job and the Mexico City setting, "The Chambermaid" might remind you of [Alfonso Cuarón's "Roma."](#) But the differences may be more significant than the similarities. Eve, unlike Cleo in Cuarón's pointedly nostalgic film, is part of the 21st century capitalist economy, employed by a corporation rather than a family. What is striking about the hotel — what makes it unsettling and also intriguing — is its impersonality. Workers and guests move through the corridors and up and down the elevators in large numbers, anonymous particles in a complicated physics problem. There is not a lot of domestic warmth here, but there are nonetheless moments of human connection, solidarity and even freedom. Empty rooms sometimes offer refuge — time and space to think, to read ("[Jonathan Livingston Seagull](#)" in Eve's case), to look out at the city and dream.

Avilés approaches Eve's inner life with frank and tactful sympathy, and depicts her circumstances with unsentimental clarity. The film's style is austere — there are few camera movements and no musical score — but its visual wit and emotional sensitivity lift it above the minimalist miserablism that drags down so many well-meaning films about modern workers. After you've seen it, the world looks different.

### The Chambermaid

Not rated. In Spanish, with subtitles. Running time: 1 hour 42 minutes.

**The Chambermaid**  NYT Critic's Pick

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When you purchase a ticket for an independently reviewed film through our site, we earn an affiliate commission.

**Director** Lila Avilés

**Writers** Lila Avilés, Juan Carlos Marquéz

**Stars** Gabriela Cartol, Teresa Sánchez

**Running Time** 1h 42m

# The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES

# Summer Movies 2019: Here's What's Coming Soon to Theaters

Memorial Day means blockbusters, horror tales and indie comedies are headed your way. We've picked the best films to look out for.

By Ben Kenigsberg

May 23, 2019



*Here is a highly select list of noteworthy films due out this season. Release dates are subject to change.*

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## June 26

**THE CHAMBERMAID** This first feature from the Mexican filmmaker Lila Avilés observes the routines of a hotel maid (Gabriela Cartol). “Our sense of exploitation and alienation is palpable, but the moments of beauty, tenderness and freedom that punctuate the drudgery provide flickers of humanity that feel almost miraculous,” [A.O. Scott wrote in The New York Times](#) when the film played at New Directors/New Films earlier this year.

**The New York Times**

# *Democratic Debate, G20, Women's World Cup: Your Friday Briefing*



By **Chris Stanford**

June 28, 2019



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Good morning.

We're covering the second **Democratic presidential debate**, a pair of major **Supreme Court decisions**, and **the Group of 20 summit** in Japan. It's also Friday, so there's **a new news quiz**.

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Here's what else is happening

**Watch:** Lila Avilés's first feature film, "[The Chambermaid](#)," finds pathos and a hint of magic in the routines of a young hotel worker.

## The New York Times

## *Your Friday Briefing*

G20, Debate, Italy: Here's what you need to know to start your day.

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By [Andrea Kannapell](#)

June 27, 2019



(Want to get this briefing by email? Here's the [sign-up](#).)

Good morning.

We're covering the **G20 leaders' gathering** in Osaka, Europe's scramble to get **barter-trade going with Iran** and **a rescue ship's challenge to Italy**.

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Here's what else is happening

**Watch:** Lila Avilés's modest and miraculous first feature film, "[The Chambermaid](#)," finds pathos and a hint of magic in the routines of a young hotel worker.





# Film Review: 'The Chambermaid'

A complement to Alfonso Cuarón's "Roma," Mexican writer-director Lila Avilés' feature debut invites audiences to share a hotel maid's hopes and dreams.

By **PETER DEBRUGE**



Director: Lila Avilés

With: Gabriela Cartol, Teresa Sánchez. (Spanish, English dialogue)

Release Date: Jun 28, 2019

Running time: 102 MIN.

Official Site: <https://www.kinolorber.com/film/view/id/3358>

Eve works as a maid at the upscale Hotel Presidente Intercontinental in Mexico City. Every room she enters is a chore — changing linens, scrubbing toilets and so on — but also a window into lives more luxurious than her own. Left alone with the affairs of the hotel's rich guests, Eve indulges her curiosity. She doesn't simply empty waste bins but spreads out their contents and picks through what she finds there for clues to how the other half lives. The irony, of course, is that director Lila Avilés has designed her debut feature, "The Chambermaid," to give audiences the opposite opportunity, inviting us to step into the shoes of an invisible woman for two hours, and as such, her film is a rare and special thing.

In the real world, someone like Eve might be considered "common," but as the protagonist of her own motion picture — imbued, by lead actress Gabriela Cartol, with the aching sense that

something greater awaits — she's extraordinarily uncommon. In that way, it's a nice complement to Alfonso Cuarón's "Roma," which similarly brought outsiders into the private space of a lower-class domestic worker, and also screened at the 2018 [Toronto Film Festival](#), where Avilés' relatively modest but comparably humane film debuted. Except that "Roma" seemed to judge its heroine's worth in relation to the family she served (consider the movie's poster, which depicts the group hug moments after Cleo saves one of her young charges from drowning), whereas "The Chambermaid" puts its protagonist at the center of a world she tends, but to which she has no access.

Minutely attuned as Avilés and co-writer Juan Carlos Marquéz are to aspects of gender, race and class, their understated yet observational screenplay focuses on this young woman's hopes and dreams, however modest, rather than those of her employers: Eve aspires to be promoted to the 42nd floor, with its exclusive executive suites; she yearns for a red dress left behind by a guest, patiently waiting several days before the unclaimed garment can be hers; and she makes time on her breaks to reach her daughter by phone, wishing for a situation that gave her more time with family at home (an abstract place we never see).

From the opening scene, in which Eve uncovers a surprise while restoring order to a room that looks like it was ransacked by wildebeests, Avilés makes clear the everyday unpleasantness that is her job, as well as the condescending and often inhuman way the customers (many of whom don't even speak Spanish) treat the help. Some appear to be more considerate, such as the woman who floats the idea of poaching Eve from the hotel to come work as a nanny to her child. But Eve is easily forgotten. In fact, the dull moth gray color of the chambermaids' uniforms makes it that much easier for guests to overlook them — and we might, too, if Avilés had amplified the white characters' perspective.

But "The Chambermaid" takes place largely behind the scenes, following Eve and her co-workers up the service elevator, into storage closets and amid the mountains of laundry in what appears to be the basement. In fact, Eve's access to the hotel is so different from the guests' that the film's final shot — like watching an innocent man escape from Alcatraz — feels so thrilling simply in the way the world must at last view her as an equal among the other humans in frame. Still, Avilés approaches Eve with that same sense of dignity throughout, reminiscent of the respect Pascale Ferran showed a hotel cleaning woman in her poem-like film "Bird People."

Although guided primarily by her imagination, the self-taught director — who experimented with several award-winning short films before undertaking her first feature — met and researched the chambermaids working at the Intercontinental during the long pre-production and rehearsal phases. For the most prominent roles, Avilés resisted the recent trend in Latin American cinema of using amateur performers, instead casting a professional actress as Eve. Even then, Cartol proves so unmannered, so utterly believable at times, one could be forgiven for assuming that Avilés had found her working at the Intercontinental (which happened with several of the minor supporting parts).



The film may feel minimalist to those accustomed to watching mighty heroes save the world and whatnot, but there's an intricacy to all the seemingly mundane details Avilés opts to include, and a photographic instinct behind the way she composes each scene. Sitcoms and studio movies have established a comfortable assortment of angles for covering spaces like the hotel rooms and hallways where "The Chambermaid" takes place, and yet, Avilés and DP Carlos Rossini (a vital collaborator in the film's design) render these areas somewhat alien. At times, we see them from Eve's perspective, as in low angles that seem to decapitate other characters as she retrieves lost objects from under the bed. In other cases, she could be a creature in a posh terrarium, an amateur anthropologist snooping through strangers' things in their absence.

There exists an unspoken contract between hotel guests and the anonymous maids who tidy their affairs: These women are expected to clean but not to cross the line, as Eve often does, albeit innocuously. Avilés was inspired by Sophie Calle's book "L'Hôtel," in which the artist photographed the personal effects of hotel guests without their knowledge. "The Chambermaid" is comparably intrigued by those who stay at the Intercontinental, but more importantly, it depicts the dynamic between the staff, as in Eve's budding friendship with a co-worker named Minitoy (Teresa Sánchez), or the vaguely romantic glances exchanged with a bashful window-washer, forever separated by glass. The latter is one of the few people who actually seems to see Eve. Thanks to this incredibly patient and empathetic film, we do too — a lesson likely to transform the way we perceive an entire category of our fellow humans.

Film Review: 'The Chambermaid'

Reviewed at AFI Fest, Nov. 10, 2018. (Also in Toronto Film Festival — Platform.) Running time: 102 MIN. (Original title: "La camarista")

PRODUCTION: (Mexico) A Kino Lorber release of a Limerencia, Foprocine, Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía, Bad Boy Billy Prod., La Panda Prods., Bambú Audiovisual production. Producers: Lila Avilés, Tatiana Graullera. Executive producers: Jana Diaz-Juhl, Pau Brunet, Axel Shalson, Carlos F. Rossini, Emiliano Altuna.

CREW: Director: Lila Avilés. Screenplay: Avilés, Juan Carlos Marqués. Camera (color, widescreen): Carlos F. Rossini. Editor: Omar Guzmán.

WITH: Gabriela Cartol, Teresa Sánchez. (Spanish, English dialogue)



FILM COMMENT

# The Big Screen: The Chambermaid

(Lila Avilés, Mexico, Kino Lorber, Opening June 26)

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By [Lawrence Garcia](#) in the [May-June 2019](#) Issue

The ins and outs of hotel work, as explored in films as disparate as Benoît Jacquot's *A Single Girl* (1995) and Pascale Ferran's *Bird People* (2014), take on an uncanny resonance in Lila Avilés's *The Chambermaid*. In this precisely scaled debut feature, the site of such labor is the Hotel Presidente Intercontinental, a luxurious lodging along the Paseo de Reforma in Mexico City where Eve (Gabriela Cartol), a diminutive 24-year-old housekeeping attendant (or camarista), dispatches her duties with brisk efficiency. Though the film might seem like yet another socially conscious but dully programmatic festival-circuit object, Avilés differentiates it with her talent for droll observation and keen eye for the unfamiliar. Using foreboding static frames and claustrophobic shallow-focus shots, the Mexican director renders the hotel's oppressively modernist spaces—emblematic of increasingly globalized networks of wealth and power—with an appropriate alienness. It's as though we're seeing them for the first time.



Avilés made  
The  
Chambermaid  
after directing

a stage play on the same subject, which in turn was inspired by French artist Sophie Calle's *The Hotel*, a photography book drawn from her stint at a Venetian hotel in 1981. But Avilés's natural filmmaking talents are on full display from the jump: a fixed composition of a cluttered suite sees Eve's metronomic activity interrupted by her belated discovery of the room's occupant, a charged turn that's indicative of the director's willingness to generate tension through judicious withholding. Informed by Avilés's years-long research in the hospitality industry, *The Chambermaid* maintains its granular, procedural attention to service work without ever leaving Eve's side or the confines of the Hotel Presidente.

Cartol as Eve appears in every scene of the film, and with few exceptions maintains a studied composure even when buffeted about by all manner of slights, blows, and casual indignities. Eve's halting interactions with her co-workers and the hotel guests play out in mostly disconnected scenes that together chart a cyclical progression, but there's also a through line in the form of her personal and professional aspirations: to spend more time with her 4-year-old son Ruben (never seen); to acquire the expensive red dress left in the guest lost-and-found; to obtain her GED with the help of classes offered by the hotel; and to work her way up to the building's penthouse floor.

Eve's tireless negotiations of these challenges constitute the better part of the film, though Avilés offsets the dogged proceedings with a welcome strain of absurdist humor. Eventually though, the script takes a pessimistic turn that isn't implausible so much as dismayingly pro forma. Avilés's film is decidedly not emancipatory or escapist in the way of, say, Ferran's fantastical, shape-shifting *Bird People*, with which it nonetheless shares an underlying impulse to defamiliarize. And it doesn't have to be. But in stark contrast to what came before, such maudlin developments—in particular, an implied betrayal on the part of Minitoy (Teresa Sánchez), an older female co-worker of Eve's—are still cause for disappointment.

Given its setting and subject matter, *The Chambermaid* invites comparison to Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*, not least because both films include meaningful skyward pans that show their respective protagonists ascending toward a building rooftop. But whereas Cuarón ends his monochrome memory play on this beatific note of contemplation, Avilés brings her camera back down in a seeming rejection of such poetic grace. The film's closing image, which offers a rare view of the outside world from the hotel lobby, confirms Avilés's (literally) ground-level commitment to probing the material limits of her chosen milieu—which, for so many, is no real choice at all.

**Lawrence Garcia** is a Vancouver-based film writer and a frequent contributor to *Cinema Scope* and MUBI Notebook.



★★★★☆ | Monica Castillo

June 26, 2019 | 4

Slow, steady, and with an exacting eye for detail, [Lila Avilés](#)' "The Chambermaid" is a painfully astute observational drama about a young woman working in one of Mexico City's posh hotels. The movie closely follows Evelia or Eve ([Gabriela Cartol](#)), for short, on her daily rounds of dreary tasks. It begins at a low point of her day: picking up a particularly messy room with clothes strewn on every surface and everything out of place. She settles into a rhythm of working quickly and efficiently—bagging garbage, wiping surfaces and straightening up the place until she discovers a body at the bottom of a pile of sheets that had fallen on the floor. Fortunately, the guest stirs and acts more embarrassed and groggy than angry at being discovered by a member of the housekeeping staff. Eve excuses herself from the awkward moment. There's so much left for her to do.

Later, the audience learns more about Eve. She works hard to provide for her four-year-old boy back home and enrolls in the hotel's equivalent of GED classes so she can move

up. At the cafeteria, she only takes a cheap snack as a way to bring home more money before spending it. There are subtle ways in which her job grinds on her self-worth, like when a supervisor scolds her and reminds Eve that she's not to be seen by guests or to spend too much time in guest areas, like an innocuous elevator bank. Some of her co-workers have their own agendas, and they try to prey on Eve's kindness for extra help or money. For the most part, guests treat her as if she's invisible, except for one privileged Argentine new mom who relies on her to watch her baby so she can shower. Even when it seems that someone can see Eve as a person, something happens to remind the audience just how isolated our main character remains.

Avilés' feature debut offers a snapshot of the under-appreciated and undervalued worker: the camera watches Eve closely with close-ups or medium shots, giving the audience a sense of Eve's growing frustration with her environment. We can see her eyes fall every time she's told to wait for a red dress she found that a guest left behind. We also see her steal away precious moments of privacy just to eat, call her son, relax or flirt. "The Chambermaid" doesn't gloss over the laborious nature of her job—folding every bedsheet, dusting every surface, and so on—but it also captures how Eve invents ways to break the tedious routines. She's curious about her guests, the books they bring and the things they throw out, making each room a different space for her to explore. Her duty-bound job may obscure her humanity to those around her, but the movie doesn't lose sight of the qualities that make us more than cogs in a machine.

Cartol gives an incredibly nuanced performance as Eve. It's thrilling yet painful to watch her pent up so much quiet frustration in her eyes. Like waiting for an unsteady stack of Jenga tiles, you don't know when her emotions are going to come crashing down, but they most assuredly will—they must. Yet, even in the movie's quieter moments, Cartol's performance is just as effective. Her character is shy, and we see her struggle to navigate the social awkwardness of her co-workers trying to sell her their items or the rush of panic when she's uncomfortable with a man's attention. Cartol never has to spell out what's Eve thinking about; her eyes tell us so much.

Just as Cartol's subtle performance shapes the movie, so does the sleek, modern hotel where she works. Eve cleans these expensive rooms that cost way more than her meager paycheck. The clash between the classes is just as apparent as the hotel's black and white interiors. In the world of the hotel staff, the setting takes on an industrial grey and peckish off-white colors. It's a place that does not need to look good for guests, and is visually separated from anything that resembles the freedom or bright light the guests enjoy. Eve enjoys a few private moments in cramped supply closets and rooms under construction, creating a small space for herself in this bleak behind-the-scenes world.

Last year, "[Roma](#)" began many conversations about the depictions of housekeepers and domestic workers. "The Chambermaid" is somewhat a continuation of that conversation but without the burden of being based on someone's memory. Avilés is more interested in the minutiae of her character's life than making larger social commentary, her lens instead focused on Eve's dull tasks, the family she calls often, and her ambition to move up in the hotel's hierarchy. With her film, Avilés unlocks a world full of hope and disappointment, a workday that may bring peril or boredom. It may feel less epic in scale, but "The Chambermaid" is just as emotionally potent and perhaps even more successful at questioning the power dynamics of a workplace that has lost its sense of compassion.



# The Chambermaid

By [Juan Diaz](#) | June 28, 2019



**Moving Up**  
by Juan Diaz

*The Chambermaid*  
Dir. Lila Avilés, Mexico, Kino Lorber

In *The Chambermaid*, Lila Avilés crafts an empathetic study of a lonely housekeeper, Eve (Gabriela Cartol), grinding through a near-Sisyphian cleaning job in order to eke out a better life. Though inspired by Sophie Calle's *The Hotel*, a photographic project in which the French artist worked as a chambermaid to surreptitiously take photos of guests' personal belongings, Avilés's debut film is hardly voyeuristic. It is instead an intimate look at the unseen labor of a young woman whose stirrings of desire and hope bump up against a difficult reality.

Despite her present circumstances, Eve is actively focusing on her future. She is taking GED classes before her shifts, and seeking a promotion onto a higher floor. During the work week she sleeps in a hiding spot in the hotel to avoid a brutal commute. Her actual home is nearly two hours away on the outskirts of Mexico City, so she entrusts the care of her child to a friend. She is only able to check in with her son over the phone during her limited breaks. The film never leaves the hotel, underscoring Eve's confinement and the extent of her sacrifice. In Mexico and Latin America, poor women have historically been forced to seek employment far from home and family, and Eve's situation is a modern iteration of this phenomenon.


Eve resists making the hotel her home. She does not appear to have many friends, and during lunch breaks keeps to herself and her homework. A window-washer makes romantic overtures, even drawing a soapy heart on the window of a room she is cleaning—she responds by closing the blinds. What others take for awkwardness or meekness is more of a repression in the service of her work. To render Eve's isolation, Avilés often uses a shallow depth of field, in which only the immediate foreground—frequently Eve's face—is in focus. The world around her is superfluous, a distraction from her work.

Avilés's visual strategy amplifies Eve's cloistering. Tracking and eye-level shots positioned in strategic corners evoke the following eye of a security camera. It often feels like we are watching a woman imprisoned. Cinematographer Carlos Rossini's austere color palette and detached camera, nestled in the tight spaces of the hotel rooms, successfully turn a stylish hotel into a cramped prison. Avilés spent years developing her script by observing housekeepers at the same hotel where the film was shot. She accordingly grants her protagonist's labor a respect rarely seen onscreen. Brushing blood from a bathtub or patting fresh linens into submission, Eve performs her work meticulously. Avilés smartly sits her camera still and lets her actress perform her tasks within the frame, à la Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*. And as in that film, even the occasional moment of quiet that Eve gets to enjoy is brimming with silent anxiety.

The film is populated almost entirely by women, their relationships a central part of Avilés's focus. Eve's growing relationship with new coworker Miriam, or Minitoy (Teresa Sanchez), is one that initially discomforts her. The lively Minitoy, who had been deported from the U.S., seems to view Eve's boundaries as a challenge and often asks her indiscreet questions. But her rescue of Eve when she accidentally stains a guest's linens allows Eve to finally warm up to her, and to begin to accept the possibility of human connection. When Minitoy starts looking like another contender for the promotion, however, it reveals that friendship in a place like this can be fraught.

*The Chambermaid* incisively explores the ways economic inequities color working women's interpersonal relationships. Though there is occasional solidarity, there is also an undercurrent of distrust, or an eagerness to re-perform on others the mistreatment visited on them. The woman who operates the elevator curtly reminds Eve she can't eat her snack, her single meal for the day, inside the elevator. Later, the same woman reveals that an injury put her out of a higher-status job at the hotel, and she was assigned to elevator duty. Eve's munching of popcorn is an affront to the one space where she has a semblance of control. When a strict supervisor, a former housekeeper herself, writes up Eve for not finishing a room on time, she reminds Eve that discipline was far more severe when she was in her position. These women offer what they think is crucial knowledge to survive.

Eve is not content with just surviving, however. She has a growing interest in the world that lies beyond the hotel's glass walls. When, near the end of the film, her professional plans take a blow, Eve realizes the folly of giving your life to an institution that sees you as dispensable. Dejected, she sneaks into the upper levels of the building, clutching the second-hand dress she

was given by the lost-and-found department as a terribly timed consolation. In a wide shot on the roof of the building (and the first scene set entirely outside), Eve takes in the city view, one she has only seen through the hotel's windows. The possibility of other horizons has been imprinted on her. That this discovery is relayed so quietly is a testament to Avilés's humane direction and Cartol's graceful performance. 

MOVIES

# 'The Chambermaid' ('La Camarista'): Film Review

1:12 PM PDT 6/17/2019 by Jonathan Holland



THE BOTTOM LINE

*The inhospitality of the hospitality industry.* [🐦](#)

OPENS

6/28/2019

Lila Aviles' debut portrays the daily grind of a worker in a luxury Mexico City hotel.

In its way as clean-lined and efficiently structured as the high-rise Mexico City hotel in which it is set, Lila Aviles' quietly distinctive feature *The Chambermaid* also has something of the hotel's chilly remoteness. But its dispassionate approach toward the major injustices and minuscule triumphs that make up the life of its protagonist, superbly played by Gabriela Cartol, is always balanced by compassion, perhaps making it more effective than any impassioned rant.

Sureness of touch and a sometimes asphyxiating intensity are the hallmarks of a relentlessly low-key first outing that has been garnering plaudits on its travels, most recently at Spain's Lleida Latin-American Film Festival. A U.S. release is scheduled for June 26.

The opening scene neatly sets things up as chambermaid Evelia (Cartol), known as Eve, tidying up a disgusting mess of a room, discovers a naked, old and presumably wealthy man under the bed. This suggests him as human trash, but as the film goes on to show, it is the power of people like him who define the parameters of Eve's life.

A single mother, Eve has a child whom she phones regularly but rarely sees, obliged as she is to work long hours to be able to raise said child. Working on the 23rd floor, she aspires to move to the newly reopened 42nd floor, which is more prestigious. Occasionally, in miniature acts of private defiance, she will pick up and pocket small items of trash she finds.

Eve is also in daily contact with a range of people. Among them are an elevator operator who reads romantic novels as a way of escaping (Eve herself ends up reading *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*); an attendant who keeps trying to sell her kitchenware; and her boss, who promises Eve time and time again that eventually she will receive an unclaimed red dress that has been found. There are a surprising number of these people, and it is testimony to the balance and efficiency of the script that neither they nor their storylines feel underdeveloped.

The closest to love that exists for Eve inside the hotel is a window cleaner who draws a heart in soap for her, a sequence ending in a scene that may be the film's single concession to fantasy. And the closest thing to friendship comes via the bubbly, motherly Minitoy (Teresa Sanchez), who takes Eve under her wing. But the demands of her job have made Eve too wary to fully give herself to any of these experiences.

Under the unflinching, steady gaze of Carlos F. Rossini's carefully positioned camera (one key scene apart, we never leave the hotel), a wheel of relationships is therefore built up with Eve at its center. As it turns, it opens up to us a devastating if unemphatic portrait of a highly controlled, stifling micro-society where the dreams of the poor are defined by the rich; where the poor unknowingly imitate the behavior of their masters; where people doing useless jobs earn far more than the useful people who clean up after them; and where economic concerns appear to have stifled spontaneous human interaction.

If this sounds political, then it is, as with Sophie Calle's book of photographs, *Hotel*, that partly inspired it — but *The Chambermaid*'s quietness, subtlety and modesty of style always keep it dramatically engaging. On the downside, there's a tendency to break the flow by somewhat brusque fades to black.

Cartol plays Eve with trembling sensitivity: Experience has taught the character that for survival, self-effacement to the point of self-erasure may be the best strategy. Eve's sometimes exasperating self-control is perhaps Aviles' way of showing how internalized her suffering has become; her voice rises above a whisper only twice, once in laughter and the other in protest, when she's alone.

Another of the pic's multiple threads has Eve looking after the child of Romina (strikingly played by Agustina Quinci), an effervescent, oblivious Argentinian guest. In its treatment of the broken relationships between mothers and children, and in the not dissimilar, buttoned-down approaches to their roles taken by Cartol and by Yalitzza Aparicio, comparisons will be made

between Eve and the maid Cleo in Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*, but there's one key difference: In *The Chambermaid*, Eve is rewarded with no opportunity for heroism.

*Production companies: Bad Boy Billy, La Panda*

*Cast: Gabriela Cartol, Teresa Sanchez, Agustina Quinci*

*Director: Lila Aviles*

*Screenwriters: Lila Aviles, Juan Marquez*

*Producers: Tatiana Graullera, Lila Aviles*

*Executive producers: Jana Diaz-Juhl, Pau Brunet, Axel Shalson, Carlos F. Rossini, Emiliano Altuna*

*Director of photography: Carlos F. Rossini*

*Production designer: Vika Fleitas*

*Costume designer: Nora Solis Zepeda*

*Editor: Omar Guzman*

*Casting director: Lucia Uribe*

*Sales: Alpha Violet*

*102 minutes*





MOVIES & TV

## Review: 'The Chambermaid' is interesting but inert low-budget answer to 'Roma'

G. Allen Johnson | July 3, 2019 | Updated: July 3, 2019, 1:44 pm



Gabriela Cartol stars in the Mexican film "The Chambermaid," directed by Lila Avilés.

Photo: Kino Lorber

There's a scene about three-quarters into "The Chambermaid" where Eve, a maid at a high-end Mexico City hotel, strips naked for the viewing pleasure of a window washer perched outside.

It's a peep show born out of sadness, a desperate plea to be recognized — by anyone — as a person.

Eve's day-to-day drudgery is the subject of director Lila Avilés' debut feature, which is adapted from her play, and unfortunately becomes a bit laborious itself. Shot almost entirely within a hotel, the film operates as a low-budget answer to "**Roma**," Alfonso Cuarón's much-lauded film that also centers on the life of a domestic worker.

"The Chambermaid" won a Mexican Oscar for best first film and the Golden Gate New Directors Award at the 2019 **SFFilm Festival**. It opens exclusively at the Roxie Theater in San Francisco on Friday, July 5.

Eve (Gabriela Cartol) cleans the 21st floor, but the dream of all the maids is to get the 42nd floor, the most luxurious of the hotel. She is a single mother, checking in with her friend who watches the baby when she is at work. She has her sights set on a beautiful red dress that has been left behind by a hotel guest; if it is not claimed, it is hers.

She also enrolls in a class set up by her union that will help her get her high school equivalency and becomes friends with a classmate and co-worker (Teresa Sánchez).

But mostly Eve cleans. And cleans. And cleans. One VIP guest on her floor is constantly demanding amenities. Another guest, from Argentina, asks for her help to care for her infant child, leading to a job offer that strangely she doesn't take seriously.

Alone in rooms, she will look through a guest's things, combing for clues of how the other half lives.

"The Chambermaid," however, runs out of steam when Eve's possibilities as a character seem exhausted. She is inert, rarely speaking unless spoken to, and is a bit of a cipher Cartol can't quite solve. It's as if Avilés doesn't quite know what to do with her creation.

The film has empathy, though, and that's a very good thing. I think I tip pretty well for maid service at hotels, but now I'm thinking I should step it up some. They deserve it.



**"The Chambermaid":** Drama. Starring Gabriela Cartol, Teresa Sánchez. Directed by Lila Avilés. In Spanish with subtitles. [Theaters and showtimes](#)



**THE WRAP**

# 'The Chambermaid' Film Review: Mexican Drama Gives Powerful Voice to Invisible Laborers

Actress Gabriela Cartol and first-time director Lila Avilés bring a hotel maid's dreams and ambitions to vivid life

Carlos Aguilar | June 26, 2019 @ 1:56 PM

Last Updated: June 26, 2019 @ 2:32 PM



Knocking on doors expecting no one to answer is a daily routine for housekeeping staff at hotels local and remote. Their intense physical labor is unseen and taken for granted, almost as if magically performed outside the vision of its beneficiaries, earns them no glory. Unnoticed, they proceed to the next empty scene in disarray. More than merely dignifying their toil, Lila Avilés' marvelously honest first feature "The Chambermaid" subtly counteracts such dehumanization.

For her sympathetically achieved big-screen debut, Avilés — who honed her skills as a theater director prior to jumping into the film arena — forged an observational character study on 24-year-old chambermaid Eve, short for Evelia (Gabriela Cartol, "I Dream in Another Language"), employed at a lavish Mexico City hotel catering mostly to affluent international visitors.

Of few words but purposefully active in shaping her future, Eve channels internalized resilience to persevere under grueling conditions. Above-average dedication shines through her

impeccable cleaning prowess room after room. Focused on her aspirations to receive a coveted promotion to a luxurious floor, Eve plays by the rules to prosper and expects her efforts to be recompensed. Measured in its pacing but never stagnant, “The Chambermaid” quietly fleshes out Eve’s subconscious with actions rather than words.

Already comfortable and competent in the medium, Avilés shows cinematic confidence by limiting dialogue to bare essentials for humor and to transcend the film’s sole location. Even though the camera never physically leaves her workplace, there’s a life for Eve beyond its walls, which the director extraordinarily and casually infiltrates via longing phone calls between completed tasks.

From these brief chats, we can infer Eve’s home is distant, as it is for many Mexicans who work in the capital but live in the outskirts, and she must start her commute in the darkness before the crack of dawn. Her late arrival and early departure don’t allow for much interaction with her four-year-old son, who likely knows his mother’s voice better than her face. Over the phone, Eve checks in with Maguitos, whose voice we never hear, her child’s trustworthy caretaker. A testament to the efficacy and narrative precision of Avilés’ writing, these details are organically conveyed.

Pervasive and evident as economic inequality is in the day-to-day of Eve and her coworkers, there are no signs of pity on the writer-director’s behalf. Contrarily, their routines are empowered with transient instances of juvenile joy, potential friendships, and even explicit sexual desires all situated within the constraints and liberties their jobs allow. At first, a recluse closed off to human interaction outside of professional matters, Eve gives in to camaraderie upon joining an adult class imparted within the hotel’s bowels to help workers attain an equivalent to a GED — another example of her pursuit of self-improvement.

Miriam, also known as Minitoy (bona fide scene-stealer Teresa Sánchez), a fellow housekeeper whose nonchalant past may have included a stint working in the United States, positions herself as Eve’s ally, chipping away at her mistrust with supportive gestures. Sánchez’s Minitoy infuses Eve’s steadily solemn shifts with jubilant presence while simultaneously illustrating an opposite approach to getting ahead: minimal effort elevated by a big personality.

Present in every luminous frame from DP Carlos Rossini, Cartol manifests Eve’s curiosity in contemplative stares and faint smiles. Although not vocally inquisitive about the affairs of others, it’s understood that her earnest interest in the guests’ odd requests and lifestyles lacks judgment.

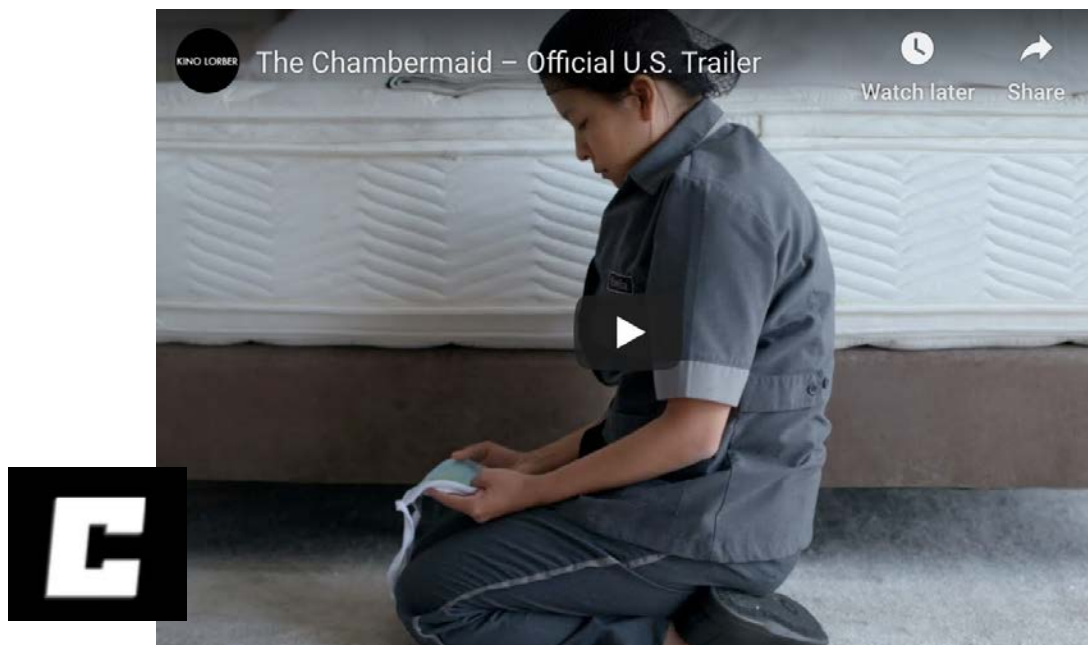
Eve emanates equanimity in her every mannerism, from the way she tucks away little secrets in her uniform’s pockets to how she admires the views of the city from windows off-limits to her. Cartol’s performance thrives with such sturdy inner strength that even when injustice strikes, Eve’s anger is muffled, only unleashed when tucked away among a pile of linens — a moment enhanced by Rossini’s cinematography, which recurrently harnesses tight spaces for an intensified effect of imprisonment.

Marked by magnificent restraint and naturalistic humanity, Cartol's construction of Eve is the work of an acting giant given the chance to leisurely develop real life from the page. The Mexican actress does much more than honor a thankless position; she bears the weight of an entire production where her ability to communicate unvarnished emotions without overdramatizing is the story's foundation. Cartol is unaffectedly magnetic.

In Eve's reality, the only constant is abandonment, a saddening fact exemplified both through her own offsite maternity and in the way people come in and out of her life without a proper farewell, be it an encouraging teacher dismissed without warning or an Argentine mother and her infant child, who required her assistance before disappearing. With each disappointment, Eve's emotional attachment to ephemeral encounters wears down, until a final blow upends her dutiful outlook.

Over the course of "The Chambermaid," a fancy red dress in the establishment's lost-and-found bin symbolizes the promise of one day, through hard work, having access to everything that's been unreachable. Eve is told her good behavior and diligence have put her at the front of the line to get it, but by the time the chance of wearing the elegant garment becomes feasible, she is not the same person who once could have been satisfied with the illusion of upward mobility.

When Eve decides she no longer wants to be a serviceable fixture, the model chambermaid considers the possibility of knocking elsewhere, where doors might actually open.





JUNE 28, 2019

# **JOSHUA REVIEWS LILA AVILES' THE CHAMBERMAID [THEATRICAL REVIEW]**

*by* Joshua Brunsting

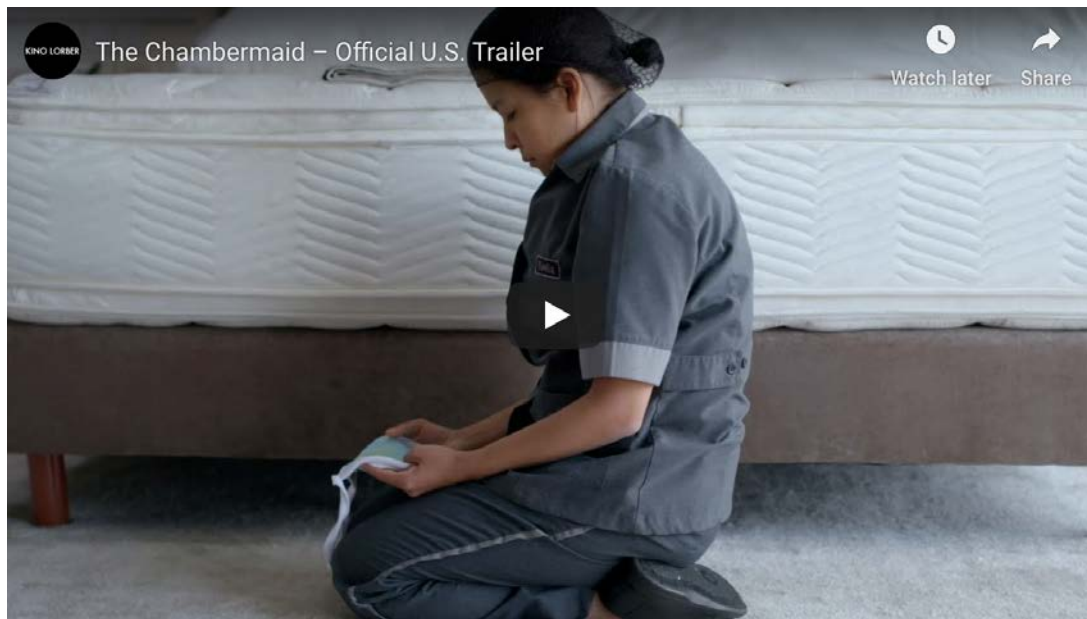


It's not every day that a filmmaker's debut feature becomes a global award-winning darling.

Winner of awards at the San Francisco, Morelia and Marrakech Film Festivals as well as winning Best First Feature at the 61st Ariel Awards (one of its nine nominations), director Lila Aviles' debut **The Chambermaid** is finally in theaters and thankfully it more than lives up to the critical hype.

A subtle and tender rumination on class in Mexico City, **The Chambermaid** introduces viewers to Eve, a down on her luck chambermaid working in a posh Mexico City hotels. A mother trying to make ends meet, Eve's life is full of long shifts and trying to elevate her station by taking on extra responsibility after taking a promotion and even venturing to the realm of adult education, taking classes with the hopes of pushing herself up the ranks at her place of work. Plaintively told through lengthy scenes that embed the viewer into a world of explicit class dynamics, **The Chambermaid** is a poignant and enveloping character study about a woman on the brink of a breakthrough in a world that only hopes to break her down.

Speaking of its win at June's Ariel Awards, the film can be contextualized opposite the show's biggest winner, Alfonso Cuarón's overrated **Roma**. A similar tale about a maid and her relationship to the world around her, where Cuarón's film feels incredibly maudlin and manipulative, Aviles' film is quite the opposite. A loving and humane film, there's no grandstanding, with Cuarón's tourist-like journey through blue-collar strife being replaced with a prescient portrait of the struggle one faces when raising yourself up the class ranks feels utterly impossible. Sure, the film doesn't have impressive black and white photography or a Netflix machine behind it, but what it does have is a purity of vision and an intimacy that is rare even in the greatest of socio-political fiction.



A veteran of the stage, Aviles proves to be a superlative film director as well. Clearly interested in performance, her frame is static and often incredibly intimate, allowing her cast to breathe life into each and every scene. Actress Gabriela Cartol is an absolute revelation here, giving a performance that's at times quite and others oozing a type of bravery rarely seen. Particularly near the film's conclusion, there's a scene involving her and a window washer that starts as potentially uncomfortable but by the end becomes one of the more rare explorations of sexual agency that one will see in all of 2019. Shot ostensibly in one location, the film has a startling economy both of language and of vision, having an uncanny ability to give Eve a life seemingly beyond the walls of the hotel without ever once stepping literally beyond them. It's a product of both an assured performer and a nuanced director, and stands as one of the more accomplished works of world cinema this year.

Shot by DP Carlos Rossini, the film's also simply gorgeous to look at. Muted but not to a fault, the film has an unassuming aesthetic that both hints at Eve's oppressive life on the bottom rungs of society and also the monotonous work that she does day in and day out. When the film breaks from this palate it's in service of character, be it the aforementioned window washer flirting sequence or a moment in which Eve must take care of a patron's child. It's a tender and sun-soaked sequence with the large windows and natural light doing away with the clinical and muddy photography that makes the majority of the film. This type of understanding of character is rare in modern cinema, and with each new sequence, there's a similar type of image to truly take one's breath away. A rare achievement, this film.

**OBSERVER**

REVIEW

# Gabriela Cartol Brings ‘The Chambermaid’ to Life With Bristling Sensitivity and Dormant Rage

By [Oliver Jones](#) • 06/22/19 10:00am



Gabriela

Cartol in *The Chambermaid*. Kino Lorber/YouTube

When asked to share something about herself by a friendly teacher, the lead character in director Lila Avilés' film festival favorite can only muster the basics. "My name is Eve," she says. When pushed, she adds, "I am 24 years old and I am a hotel maid."

At that juncture of *The Chambermaid (La Camarista)*, we know a little more than that about Eve, brought to life with bristling sensitivity and dormant rage by Mexican actress Gabriela Cartol.

She has son named Reuben whom she almost never sees. When she cleans a room, she sometimes assess the garbage in the waste bin of rich guests who stay in the Mexico City high rise hotel where she works, like an archeologist puzzling over the remnants of a culture they will never know firsthand. She showers at work because at home she has no running water.

Eve is one of the most fully and forcefully crafted characters I have seen on screen in some time. Yet to herself, her fellow workers, hotel guests and society at large, she is a maid and nothing more. Her position and all that it demands of her ("hurry up and work hard," she is told by a supervisor) has made imagining herself as anything more almost impossible.

But she is trying, and the modulated and respectful way Avilés—an actor and dramatist making her feature film directorial debut—captures those efforts is extremely moving.

Eve is taking a GED class her union has set up, and following the lead of the bibliophile that runs the service elevator, has taken to reading her first book: a tattered copy of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. She longs to take home a red dress that was left behind in one of the rooms she cleans, but where would she wear it?

Most of her dreams are trapped within the hermetically sealed tower in which she spends all but a few moments of the film. She cleans the 21st floor and wishes she could work the newly refurbished 42nd, with its wood paneled walls and infinity pool. Unlike many women who work in housekeeping and as domestics (a good primer on the subject is Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo's 2007 book *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*), Eve doesn't have a social network of friends to lean on. Even her intimate relationship with a window washer develops without the two ever touching or even conversing.

It is difficult to resist comparing *The Chambermaid* to Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*. But while that film was epic in its scope and presented its lead character in a heroic manner, Avilés' film is small in scale and wishes not to aggrandize Eve but simply give her an opportunity to exist on her own terms. There is also nothing showy about her approach. Her camera almost never moves; instead, she and cinematographer Carlos F. Rossini illustrate Eve's isolation through dramatic use of rack focus.



Two high-powered performances ably support Cartol's nuanced portrayal—both from characters whose worlds she orbits but never completely enters. Minitoy (Teresa Sanchez) is a fellow maid whose bubbly ebullience makes her the social center of the lunchroom, and perhaps starts to rub off on the somber Eve. As a rich Argentinian guest and fellow mom, Agustina Quinci is the very picture of the blissfully detached bourgeoisie; she acts as if by loaning Eve the coconut oil she rubs on her gums, somehow it will counter the crippling poverty that defines her life.

Unless you count the speed and precision with which Eve assesses and then cleans a trashed hotel room, there isn't much overt action in *The Chambermaid*. But that doesn't mean the movie, which played to much acclaim in dozens of film festivals around the world, isn't dynamic or doesn't build toward a satisfying denouement.

Like the metropolis that sprawls out far below the rooms she cleans, the film quietly pulses with life. And like Eve, we are left hoping she has a larger part to play in that world beyond smoothing blankets and folding toilet paper ends into perfect little triangles.

**THE CHAMBERMAID (LA  
CAMARISTA) ★★★1/2**

**(3.5/4 stars)**

**Directed by:** Lila Avilés

**Written by:** Lila Avilés and Juan Carlos  
Marquez

**Starring:** Gabriela Cartol, Teresa  
Sanchez and Agustina Quinci

**Running time:** 102 mins.

June 23, 2019 / Arts / Film

## Clean Sheets Daily

Lila Avilés observes a woman's work in a Mexico City hotel

[Enlarge this image](#)



KINO LORBER

Gabriela Cartol in Lila Avilés' "The Chambermaid," which opens at the Film Forum on June 26.

**BY STEVE ERICKSON**

The hotel where Mexican director Lila Avilés' "The Chambermaid" takes place is shot as if it had no exit. Although the film's title character, Eve (Gabriela Cartol), works there willingly, Avilés makes some choices that emphasize her confinement. There are almost no exteriors. Eve is constantly separated from the outside world by windows or doors. Her flirtation with a window-washer is mediated via frustration and voyeurism; in a scene near the end, she takes off her clothes slowly as he perches just outside the room where she lies on a bed.

Eve works at one of Mexico City's most luxurious hotels. The mother of a very young son, her hours prevent her from taking care of him. She finds her work a drag but thinks her life will improve if she can get a promotion to the executive suites. While she cleans hotel rooms that

cost several hundred American dollars a night, her own apartment doesn't even have a shower. She takes classes in the hotel's education program and becomes friends with an older co-worker, Minitoy (Teresa Sánchez). But the frustrations of her job pile up, and it becomes apparent that there's nothing positive to be gained from trying to get ahead there.

"The Chambermaid" brings up a few reference points. The tracking shots of Eve in motion, which show her from the back, evoke the Dardenne brothers. The concept of basing a film around a woman's tasks like cleaning rooms owes something to Chantal Akerman's "Jeanne Dielman," although there's a major difference that Eve is getting paid for her labor while Dielman is a homemaker doing unpaid work on behalf of men (and sex work as well). Like Akerman, Avilés is interested in the details of work that cinema usually goes out of its way to avoid. "The Chambermaid" devotes time to showing Eve's daily rounds before establishing much else about her life. However, Avilés cites an influence outside cinema: French artist Sophie Calle's book "L' hôtel." Calle took a job as a hotel maid in Venice and photographed the objects left behind by its guests, as well as their clothing. Even if Cartol is a professional actress playing a fictional role, the film has a documentary dimension, with some of the plot based directly around the stories of maids Avilés met researching the script.

"The Chambermaid" originated as a play, based on extensive research about maids' lives. Avilés' background lies in acting and directing theater and opera. This is her first film. However, its cinematography is crucial to its accomplishments. Avilés' approach to character goes hand in hand with her visual style: no fake intimacy or assumptions that she knows everything about Eve's life. There are plenty of long shots taken from a still camera, as well as a use of shallow focus that blurs part of the frame. The hotel setting looks so sterile and unwelcoming that the sight of menstrual blood on a pristine white sheet is jarring. Frequent images of Eve riding in elevators offer a metaphor for the class and employment mobility she's denied. The choice of Cinemascope gives her grind an epic dimension.

Eve's libido and emotional life are shown. But "The Chambermaid" de-emphasizes dialogue and obvious markers of acting. Meaningful concepts are snatched out of the air, out of context: one guest's TV is playing a news program whose guest says that all economic systems have collapsed into one; her class discusses "How is the border patrol related to the humanities?" These moments have a political resonance, but no obvious message. "The Chambermaid" stays away from a facile, conservative version of humanism, where a filmmaker serves up poor people's lives for a middle-class arthouse audience to pity. It respects Eve's introversion, allowing her odd behavioral tics.

At 100 minutes, "The Chambermaid" is slowly paced and feels longer than it actually is. But its drama picks up in the final third. If it starts out content to observe Eve's life, it builds an increasingly urgent narrative out of it. If it doesn't draw any larger conclusions about working-class life beyond "dead-end jobs are a drag," it has the optimism to let Eve imagine a better life for herself and try her best to figure out a path to it.

*THE CHAMBERMAID* | Directed by Lila Avilés | Kino Lorber | In Spanish with English subtitles | Opens Jun. 26 | Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St.; [filmforum.org](http://filmforum.org)

Film

## REVIEW: 'La Camarista' Is a Hopeful & Intimate Exploration of a Housekeeper's Life in Perpetual Limbo



By [Kiko Martinez](#) | 3 weeks ago

The concept of time becomes infinite in *La Camarista* (*The Chambermaid*), an intimate drama that offers a behind-the-scenes look into the daily grind of an everyday housekeeper working in a posh high-rise hotel in Mexico City. Director and co-writer [Lila Avilés](#)' feature film debut captures what it's like to perform the tedious work of a maid through the eyes of Evelia (Gabriela Cartol), a 24-year-old single mother who quietly aspires to do more with her life than scrub toilets and change bedsheets. If, however, that is her calling, she'd like to climb the housekeeper hierarchy on her own terms.

Evelia is taking advantage of the GED classes the hotel offers its staff. She pins her hopes on getting transferred to the coveted, newly remodeled 42nd floor, where her status as an employee will increase substantially. Her aspirations are realistic, especially since her work ethic is impeccable. The impression is that she is cleaning rooms nonstop. Avilés and first-time co-writer Juan Carlos Marquéz pen a mostly isolated existence for Evelia — one where a single shift in the confines of the hotel feels like an eternity. In fact, viewers are never taken beyond the hotel's entrance in *The Chambermaid*, although we know she has a four-year-old son named Ruben who she talks to on the phone during breaks. Instead, we watch Evelia dust lampshades, deliver extra towels to guests and fluff pillows with no end in sight. When one day ends and the next day begins is anyone's guess.

Luckily, the monotony is interrupted by small surprises every once in a while. For example, Evelia is called into a room to assist a young mother by watching her infant, so she can take a shower. In another scene, she is stopped by a Jewish guest at the elevator and is asked to help him get to the lobby by pushing the elevator buttons since it's Sabbath. One of Evelia's co-workers, the outgoing Minitoy (Teresa Sánchez), also provides her a way to escape the job's endless repetition with her infectious charm and her attempts to get Evelia to abandon her introverted personality. In an ongoing storyline, Evelia checks in with management to see if

anyone has claimed a fancy red dress a guest left behind. If a certain amount of time passes, she'll be able to keep it, which gives her something else to look forward to each day.

Nominated for eight Ariel Awards (Mexico's equivalent to the Oscars), *The Chambermaid*, which made its world



premiere last year at the Toronto Film Festival, picked up one win for Avilés (Best First Work). It, however, predictably lost out to Alfonso Cuarón's powerhouse drama *Roma* in most of the same categories. While both films share connective tissue, since both shadow maids, they are completely different films. *The Chambermaid* focuses more on the environment Evelia finds herself working in and how she is able to balance her responsibilities without becoming overwhelmed or jaded. Both films, however, show audiences why labor-intensive occupations, such as housekeeping, should never be looked upon as inferior.

Rising above the constant rumble of the hotel's industrial washing machines is Evelia's spirit. *The Chambermaid* is a story of idealism centered on a character who is stuck in perpetual limbo. She is a woman many can relate to since everyone — at some point in their lives — has probably experienced a work day or week or year that seemed to last forever. It's easy to root for someone like Evelia because deep down, we sense that if she can survive the demanding nature of her work, we can, too.

*The Chambermaid* opens June 26 at Film Forum in New York and on July 5 at Laemmle Royal in Los Angeles and the Roxie Theater in San Francisco, followed by a national rollout.



## First-Time Filmmaker Lila Avilés Wants Audiences to Pay Closer Attention

...or risk missing out on a good story.

Jul 2, 2019



Lila Avilés, director of "The Chambermaid" (2019) Photo courtesy of Kino Lorber

Writer:

**Monica Castillo**

The Mexican film industry is having a Renaissance, and one of the fresh voices of the new wave is Lila Avilés. Her feature film debut [\*The Chambermaid \(La Camarista\)\*](#) a moving portrait of a young hotel worker (Gabriela Cartol), which just won the Ariel Award for Best First Work—Mexico's version of the Oscars. Like many other filmmakers around the world, she faced a long and difficult journey to get her first film out into the world. Avilés, who also co-wrote *The Chambermaid*, didn't originally have the funds to finish her movie, so she showed it as a work-in-progress at festivals, hoping to win awards with cash prizes and find new producing partners. Her efforts paid off. *The Chambermaid* premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival alongside other Mexican films like Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma* and Alejandra Márquez Abella's *The Good Girls (Las Niñas Bien)*. *CherryPicks* spoke with Avilés about her whirlwind festival tour to complete the movie, working with her lead actress, and her road to funding on the festival circuit.

***CherryPicks*: Congratulations on last week's Ariel Award! How did it feel to win?**

Lila Avilés: It was amazing! It was a beautiful thing because it's the industry telling you you're good now. It's nice because this year was a high point for films in Mexico with [\*Roma\*](#), *The Good Girls*, *Museo*, [\*Nuestro Tiempo\*](#). Here in Mexico, because the good filmmakers are really, really good, it's a beautiful thing to be among them.

"It's like my mother always says, 'The work never fails when you come well-prepared.'"

**You mentioned *Roma*, which has some things in common with *The Chambermaid* but is a very different movie. How did you decide on the visual style for your movie?**

The process was very intuitive. When [cinematographer] Carlos Rossini joined the project, I liked that he came from the documentary world. That was important to me to have that freshness, although my style is more to let the scenes run without too much camera movement.

For me, it was important to have the focus on her, to understand her story and her relationship to the environment and the people. There's something particular about hotels, they're almost like mini-embassies or mini-countries. When I decided that the principal lead was going to



Gabriela Cartol, I told her, “Well, Gabby, for the next few weeks, you’re not going to have a second’s rest because you’re going to be involved with everything,” and she did it.

My shooting days felt like something I had trained for my entire career. You’re figuring out what works and what doesn’t. You’re watching a production that had its full faith in me from the first minute. In talking with other directors about their first film, they all have their first memory of when they gained confidence. It’s that first time that the work pays off. It’s like my mother always says, “The work never fails when you come well-prepared.”

**You showed *The Chambermaid* as a work-in-progress at a few film festivals. What was that process like?**

That was like another career, like the second leg of the Tour de France. With my producer, Tatiana Graullera, we had to look for the financing to finish post-production. So with little time, we had to enter it in Los Cabos Film Festival so we could win post-production funding, and then we entered it in Ventana Sur in Argentina, and we were lucky to win. So with that help, we were able to finish the film in one year, and because of that, we were introduced to new producers, Bad Boy Billy Production and LA Panda, who came on the film and helped make *The Chambermaid* happen.

**How did you decide this was a story you wanted to tell?**

I started on it a really long time ago. The theme of the project came from a book from the visual artist Sophie Calle that was published some time ago called *Hotel*. She was a chambermaid in Venice and [made] these photobooks which piqued my curiosity. For a few years, I practiced as a chambermaid and once I got a sense of that work, that’s when I started forming the story of *The Chambermaid*.

**Did you talk to other hotel workers for the movie?**

Oh, lots! The film is pure fiction; it’s not like it’s someone story, but there is a common theme of day after day of solitude and how people are seen as objects. We’re [feeling] the passing of time as she’s doing her daily work. There were many different ways to take that story. At one point, I thought the best thing would be to follow one woman, and that became the movie.

**How did you decide on Cartol?**

I saw her in a movie called *La Terisia*, and I thought she had a really pretty face. I had already [held] auditions with [casting director] Lucía [Uribe Bracho]. We invited Gabby to do some readings and exercises with us in person, and there was something about her mannerisms and senses that felt right. There was something about her that captivated me a lot.

**Even in her quiet moments, Cartol does so much with her body to tell the audience what's she thinking or feeling in a scene. How did you work with her on these naturalistic movements?**

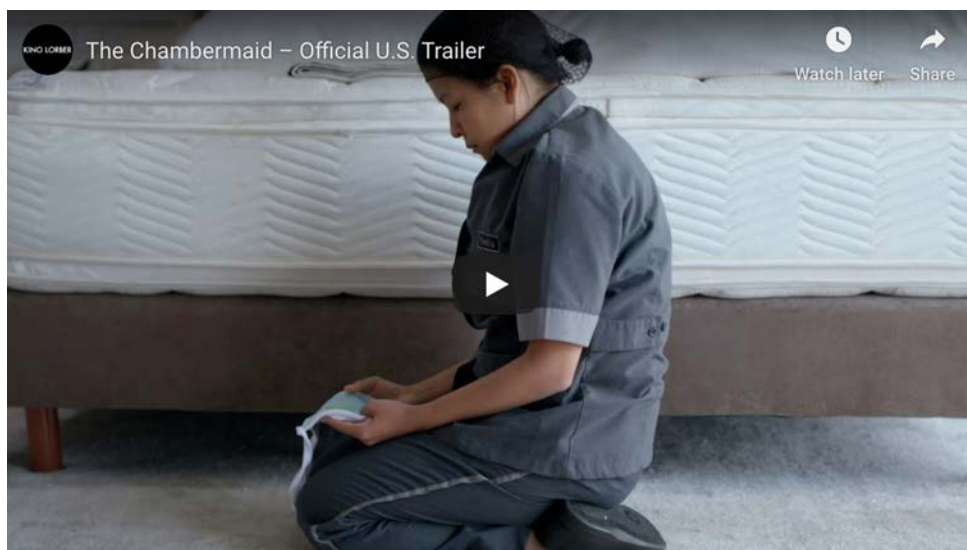
I grew up with a mom who was obsessed with cleaning all her life, and she was very hardworking. So there was something of a tribute to my mom, even though she never worked as a chambermaid.

Those solitary moments, that's a part of their daily lives. If they're not working, what are they doing? I added this list of actions into the screenplay. I also thought a lot about tradespeople in Mexico, like [the] shoe repairman, the artisan, the cleaning crew – all of them use their hands. In Spanish, we say camarista, which linguistically hints at the art of making the bed [cama]. There's a sophistication to it in the way that people work with their hands. So yes, I was very interested in how she worked with her hands.

These days, it takes us more and more work to be in those moments. There's so much information and everything passes so fast, or we're all on our cell phones. It was also important for me to show those better moments too, where she's laughing or enjoying herself. Even in the middle of war, people laugh. There's moments of light because we're not robots.

**The movie pays a lot of attention to the way people treat Cartol's character, Eve. Was this based on stories you heard or experiences you observed?**

No, it's just life. There are stories happening all around us, but we can also be indifferent to these stories. The reality of a hotel or work is that we're so wrapped up in what's happening to us, we are indifferent to everyone else. It's not just the story of the chambermaid, it's the story of humanity. Every day we're more individualistic, we're more focused on the "me." The entire world is passing us by, and we should pay better attention.



*Cherry  
Picks*

## What Movies to See (and Skip) This Week

According to the CherryPicks rankings.

Jun 28, 2019



Trine Erhart and Mikaela Von Koskull in "Maiden" (2019) Photo courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics

Writer:

**Monica Castillo**

Parades, picnics, parties...there's no shortage of celebration this weekend. Something else there's no shortage of: heat. Spend climate-controlled quality time with this week's new releases. Get the Cherry on the inspirational documentary [Maiden](#), a new twist on Shakespeare's character [Ophelia](#), and the Beatles-inspired comedy [Yesterday](#) below.



**RUN DON'T WALK**

## *The Chambermaid* ↗

A fancy resort may look glamorous, but working there is anything but. *The Chambermaid* takes an intimate look at Eve's (Gabriela Cartol's) daily routine as a maid at a high-end hotel. This honest portrait of a working class woman reveals the harsh realities of class disparity. Kristen Lopez for *The Culturress* ↗ says, "The whole movie lives and breathes on her shoulders, yet Cartol portrays all the facets of Eve's personality with a nature that's lived-in. She's quiet, but it's impossible not to see her, as both as a character and as a human."



## Notebook Column

# Moviegoing Memories: Lila Avilés

The director of “The Chambermaid” tells us about her favorite cinema and the most memorable movie-going experience of her life.

**Notebook** • 26 JUL 2019

*Moviegoing Memories is a series of short interviews with filmmakers about going to the movies. Lila Avilés's [The Chambermaid](#) is [MUBI GO's](#) Film of the Week of July 26, 2019.*



**NOTEBOOK:** How would you describe your movie in the least amount of words?

**LILA AVILÉS:** The story about Eve, a chambermaid who works in a high-class hotel in Mexico City.

**NOTEBOOK:** Where and what is your favorite movie theatre?

**AVILÉS:** Cineteca Nacional, in Mexico City.

**NOTEBOOK:** Why is it your favorite?

**AVILÉS:** Because it is the most powerful cinemateque in Mexico. Films come there from everywhere, and are shown at a really low cost, so cinema is for everyone!

**NOTEBOOK:** What is the most memorable movie screening of your life?

**AVILÉS:** *La Ciénaga*, by Lucrecia Martel. When I was young, the place to go and feel cool was the Cinetec Nacional. There I saw a lot of films that gave my friends and I the feeling of playing at being tough. But I remember when I saw *La Ciénaga* I was by myself and something really profound touched me. It was as if that movie was really talking to me, to my own family history.

**NOTEBOOK:** If you could choose one classic film to watch on the big screen, what would it be?

**AVILÉS:** *Au hazard Balthazar*, by Bresson, and *Nostalghia*, by Tarkovsky—these are films you need to feel.





33:04

## FilmWeek: 'The Chambermaid,' 'Phil,' 'Marianne & Leonard: Words of Love' and more



Larry Mantle and KPCC film critics Claudia Puig and Tim Cogshell review this weekend's new movie releases.

- ['The Chambermaid'](#) at Laemmle's Royal & Laemmle's Playhouse

**VICTORIA  ADVOCATE**

# 'The Chambermaid' Review: Lila Avilés' debut feature takes us behind scenes in tribute to service industry

By Joe Friar Jul 6, 2019 0



Last year Alfonso Cuarón' gave us a glimpse of Mexico City's past with "Roma" centered around a live-in maid named Cleo. This year Lila Avilés brings us into the present with a story about a single mom named Eve (Gabriela Cartol), who works as a chambermaid at Mexico City's luxurious Hotel Presidente Intercontinental.

The contrast between the socioeconomic classes is observed as the guests and hotel employees interact and "The Chambermaid" becomes a testament to the dedication of the service industry. We watch as the humble Eve does her best to make ends meet while catering to the sometimes-outlandish whims of the pampered guests.

Gabriela Cartol delivers an exquisite performance as the chambermaid with a flawless record in charge of the 23rd floor. Eve hopes her hard work and dedication will lead to a promotion to oversee the soon to open Penthouse suites on the 42nd floor of the cosmopolitan hotel located in the exclusive Polanco district.

The film opens with Eve accessing the situation of a filthy room. As she jumps into action gathering the dirty dishes, picking up the trash, scrubbing the bathroom, she discovers a half-naked elderly man on the floor next to the bed. He awakens to find her standing over him. Eve asks, “Do you need help?” and “Are you okay?” before he nods his head in frustration while motioning her away with his hand. It can be a thankless job for sure, but Eve apologizes and moves along.

In another scene Eve is called to a room where she finds a mother who just finished nursing her newborn. She asks Eve to stay and watch the baby while she showers but when Eve responds “I am very busy right now” the woman replies “I know but it will take just two minutes and you can watch T.V.” As the hotel guest jumps in the shower Eve embraces the child which is a quick substitute for her four-year-old son that she barely sees due to the long hours spent working at the hotel. The lady rambles on about needing a life of her own and being forced to lie in bed all day with her baby, it’s a life beyond comprehension for Eve.

Teresa Sánchez plays Eve’s rambunctious coworker Minitoy who befriends her at an early morning class at the hotel where the two are working towards getting their GED. Eve gets up at 4am to make it to class since she lives two hours away from her job. She also showers at the hotel after her shift before heading to a home with no running water. Eve’s job is physically demanding but there must be a high level of mental anguish involved after serving the affluent all day in a 5-star hotel and then returning to a small home with no gas or water.

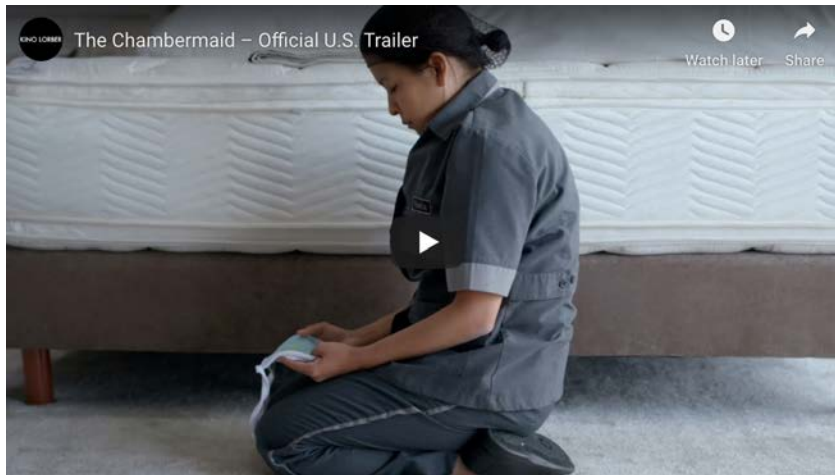
There are small moments that bring pleasure to Eve’s life such as relaxing in one of the hotel’s beautiful rooms with its sprawling view of Mexico City as she reads “Jonathan Livingston Seagull,” or the hope that a beautiful red dress left behind by a guest will become hers since it remains unclaimed in the hotel’s Lost and Found department. Then there’s the flirtatious window washer who draws soapy hearts in the hope of getting her attention. In a revealing moment late in the film, Cartol exposes a different side of her character that confirms she’s just like most of us who want to be loved.

Avilés was inspired to make the film by Sophie Calle’s book “The Hotel,” a voyeuristic look at the lives of people who checked into a Venice, Italy hotel where Calle posed as a chambermaid. She took photographs of the guest’s personal belongings in rooms she was assigned to clean. The film started as a theater piece by Avilés who studied the Performing Arts and Direction with Mexico’s leading theatrical figures Martin Acosta, Sandra Felix, and Juliana Faesler. After working for many years as a stage actress, Avilés shifted to directing which led to her debut feature film “The Chambermaid.”

This behind the scenes look at the service industry serves as a testament to Mexico's working class, many of whom were used as extras for the film. Gabriela Cartol's subtle performance, Carlos F. Rossini's keen cinematography, and the sensitive script by Avilés and Juan Carlos Marquéz make "The Chambermaid" a pleasurable experience that will forever change your perception of those assiduous servants working in Housekeeping.

(3 1/2 stars)

Now playing in select theaters. The film will be screened at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston on August 17 and 18.



**FilmEra**

# ‘The Chambermaid’ Review: An Emotional, Rewarding Stay

By Aaron Linskey on June 27, 2019



*The Chambermaid*, directed by Lila Aviles, is one of the most impressive debut films in recent memory. It feels like a perfect combination of Chantal Akerman and Lars von Trier, descending into the surprisingly meticulous world of hotel maintenance and trapping audiences in a housekeeper’s endless loop of dehumanization. It is a suffocating film, one that takes something like a guest coming to a room before it is fully cleaned and fills us with worry. It puts audiences in the shoes of a person many of us have never known but have likely seen time and time again. It is a startlingly gorgeous movie that is among one of the best films of the year.

Eve (Gabriela Cartol) is a young chambermaid at a luxury hotel in Mexico City. She cleans the rooms like she is being timed, leaving not even the slightest imperfection, and knowing she did flawless work. While cleaning these expensive suites, she is able to look out at the gorgeous city skyline that her guests see during their restful stays. The wealthy guests on her floor make absurd requests for seemingly endless amounts of toiletries or even ask her to be their temporary babysitter. When she leaves these gorgeous rooms, she must get on the elevator to descend into the bowels of the hotel. The serenity and total silence of the guestrooms is in sharp contrast to the mechanical, almost sinister elevator and the loud and continuous din of the break rooms. There, Eve must also deal with the hierarchy of the hotel’s cleaning department, where the higher the floor, the higher the pay for the cleaning staff. As Eve pushes herself to not only

get her GED but to earn a much-needed promotion, she starts to unravel over the monotonous yet demanding job she is trapped in.



Director Lila Aviles, an actress who has starred in several Mexican television shows, has a control on this film that is nothing short of marvelous. While *The Chambermaid* is without a doubt a film about class, it never feels heavy-handed the way last year's similarly themed *Roma* sometimes did. Aviles films Eve toiling away with an almost voyeuristic approach, locking the camera and the viewer into the various day-to-day operations of her job. Although Eve's tasks might be repetitive, we never get bored as a viewer because we are constantly either rooting for Eve to succeed or worrying about what might happen next. Aviles is able to tax the emotions of viewers, not unlike how Lars von Trier did with 2003's *Dogville*, a movie where a person attempting to do good deeds was slowly exploited by an entire town. While *The Chambermaid* never gets to the darkest places *Dogville* went to, there is constant apprehension about what Eve has to endure. By keeping the film entirely at the hotel, there is no delineation of days. The entire film continues on like one horrible and exhausting shift, which is likely how Eve herself feels.

Gabriela Cartol is fantastic as Eve, stoic and steadfast in her job, but relatable and caring at the same time. This role could easily have been either emotionless, choosing to primarily tap into Eve's degradation and numbness due to her seemingly-never-ending labor, or overly



sensationalized, using Eve as a tool meant to make the audience feel bad for her and other housekeepers. There is never a false moment in Cartol's performance. The film and her performance never beg the audience for sympathy. They simply ask that she and others like her be treated as people for their thankless jobs and paid accordingly.



The sound design of *The Chambermaid* is also to be commended. The periodic shift between the beautiful simplicity of the guest rooms and the chaotic nature of the work cafeteria emphasizes the massive divide between the two worlds of the hotel. From the industrial grinding of cleaning machines to the piercing cackle of a boisterous co-worker, we are unable to do anything but put ourselves into Eve's experience. *The Chambermaid* is yet another example that how even a low-budget film can have a completely immersive sound design.

*The Chambermaid* is a film that really sneaks up on the audience. What easily could have been another story of how class in a Mexican city leads to the mistreatment of the working class instead becomes a carefully constructed, beautiful, and emotional experience. Lila Aviles' *The Chambermaid* is a film that needs to be seen by everyone. It will no doubt play in the minds of viewers next time they stay at a hotel, humanizing a person who is so often ignored.

★★★★1/2

## The Chambermaid

By CAROLINE ELY June 25, 2019



*The Chambermaid* thrums with anxiety beneath its sterile, stoic surface. Ostensibly a slice-of-life portrait of a maid in a high-end Mexico City hotel, Lila Avilés's slow-burn debut film critiques capitalism as a racket where you have to run to stay in place and solidarity with others is strictly temporary.

Eva is a young woman with a shy smile, but we don't see her face for a long time during the long opening sequence. She has her back to us as she fumbles over discarded objects in a hotel room, rootling through the bedsheets until she uncovers a shirtless man lying on the floor under the bed. We feel we might have stumbled into a Jim Jarmusch pastiche or an absurd murder mystery.

That misleading impression will fade, but the initial image of a faceless protagonist will not. Avilés uses over-the-shoulder shots and cuts off facial features out of the frame throughout, amplifying a sense of facelessness and anonymity as uniformed

Eva, wearing the requisite hairnet, goes up and down elevators, paces halls, and pushes her cart through the hotel's monochrome, claustrophobic yet endless expanses. The system treats Eva like part of a machine, but in between rooms, tasks, and shifts, Eva reveals some of her life to us.

And it's a tough one. Eva hustles to prepare guest rooms, directed by a voice over a crackly walkie-talkie. In a capricious political landscape, bosses dangle incentives but calmly blow off requests to deliver; colleagues push side hustles and offer favors to be called in later; guests coldly issue orders. Tasks are repetitive, but one snafu can throw routines scarily out of whack. This is an airless, guarded world, and like the hardworking Eva, the film barely leaves it.

A few of Eva's encounters offer a respite from the grind. She earns a little money by minding the baby of an entitled, ditzy, but kind-hearted hotel guest, a bubbly comic foil to the quiet maid. Eva's careful handling of the baby lets us see the warmth denied to her own baby whom, we know from her hushed phone conversations, she has waiting at home. Later, she allows herself to be drawn out by an upbeat young teacher with whom she is studying for her GED. And a partnership of sorts may beckon with Eva's classmate Minitoy (Teresa Sánchez), a shambling extrovert who brings a weirdly sinister touch to overfriendliness.

All these meetings offer promises of a kind, and in their own way each will come up short. Eva's explosion of anger at unending bad news is a long time coming, and it's a dance of rage that briefly sets her free. Special moments in life emerge to interrupt the routine of our lives, the film tells us. Just don't believe they mean anything.

Directed by Lila Avilés

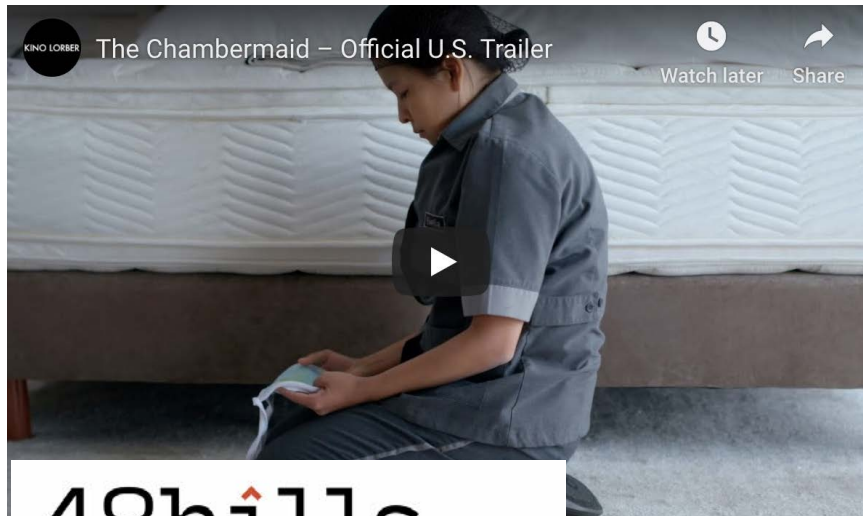
Written by Avilés and Juan Carlos Marquez

Released by Kino Lorber

Spanish with English subtitles

Mexico. 102 min. Not rated

With Gabriela Cartol and Teresa Sánchez



48hills

Independent San Francisco news + culture



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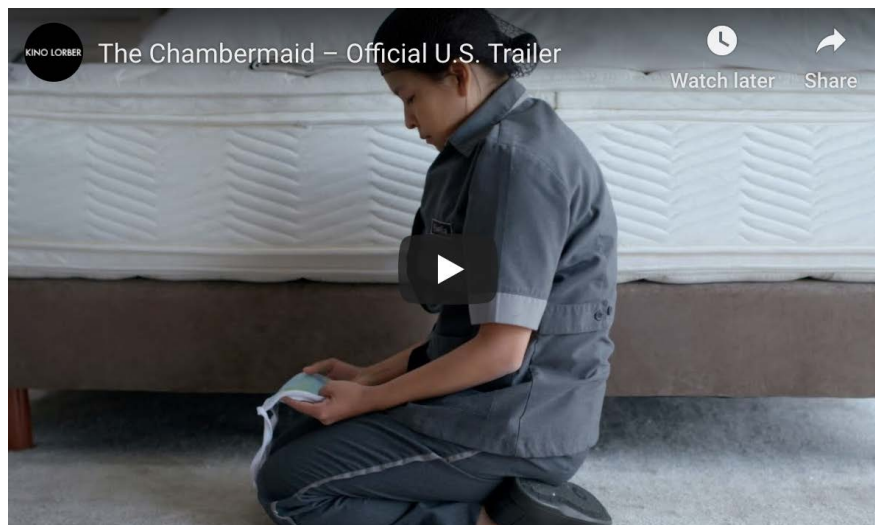
## The Chambermaid

The flipside of the warm, inclusive portrait of domestic help/domestic life in last year's *Roma* is offered by this, another Mexico City-set drama about a professional housekeeper. Well, Eve (Gabriela Cartol) doesn't exactly keep a house—she works in Housekeeping at a luxury hotel, where the attention to detail is exacting and her duties sometimes unpleasant, even inappropriate. In the opening scene of Lila Aviles' minimalist tale, she seems to discover a

elderly guest's dead body on the floor of his room. It turns out he's just fallen out of bed, but he's not even nice about being woken after having given her the shock of her life.

At first Eve's daily toil seems ordinary, between all the cleaning and the sometimes imperious demands of patrons. But eventually we glimpse that she's got a curious streak, as well as a stand-offish nature towards coworkers that is somewhat tested by the aggressive overtures of friendship (and perhaps something else) by fellow maid Minatoy (Teresa Sanchez). It takes a long time before we begin to perceive that Eve might have a big secret or two of her own. And it's not just that she's never read a book. (A kindly GED-prep tutor on site gives her *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*.)

A study in repressed emotions whose cause is tantalizingly only semi-revealed at the ambiguous ending, this is a head-on look at an ordinary job most of us seldom think about, but also a cryptic character study whose mysteries run deeper than you originally expect. *Roxie*. [More info here.](#)





Movie Reviews

## Capsule reviews for July 5

5 July 2019 by [Todd Jorgenson](#)

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### **The Chambermaid**

The title character is humble and unassuming, just like this low-budget Mexican drama that nevertheless has plenty to say beneath the surface. Eve (Gabriela Cartol) is a housekeeper at a posh hotel in Mexico City, working in a socioeconomic realm completely different from the one she endures at home. The film explores that contrast, as she maintains a quiet dignity despite facing some injustices on the job, while seeking reconciliation within her fractured family. Rookie director Lila Aviles keeps the story contained to its single setting, with Eve's interactions driving the no-frills narrative. Thanks to the expressive Cartol, the result is deliberately paced yet quietly powerful. (Not rated, 102 minutes).



INTERVIEWS

## Lila Avilés: "El cine es donde más feliz me he sentido"

*by Gilda Baum-Lappe* | *June 28, 2019*

[EN ESPAÑOL](#), [LILA AVILÉS](#), [CINEMA MEXICANO](#), [MEXICO](#), [LA CAMARISTA](#)





La ópera prima de Lila Avilés, *La camarista*, tuvo su estreno internacional en la 43ª edición del Festival Internacional de Cine de Toronto (TIFF) y posteriormente estrenó a nivel nacional en México en el 16º Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia (FICM), donde obtuvo el premio Ojo al Mejor largometraje mexicano. Tras su presentación en Los Ángeles en el Festival Hola México, tuvimos oportunidad de hablar con Lila, entusiasmada ante la noticia de que *La camarista* sería distribuida en Estados Unidos. Quizás el resultado del éxito de la película *Roma*, a nivel internacional, sea la curiosidad y el recibimiento que ha generado hacia nuevas películas de creadores mexicanos. Sin embargo, *La camarista*, aunque ha tenido comentarios y comparaciones con el film de Alfonso Cuarón, fue más bien inspirada por un libro de fotografías de la artista visual Sophie Calle, que Lila "descubrió" casualmente.

### **¿Cómo se convirtió un libro de fotografía en inspiración para una película?**

El libro se llama *Hotel*. Sophie, la fotógrafa, se metió a trabajar 'de contrabando' como camarista en un hotel en Venecia y tomaba fotos de las pertenencias, objetos, basura y de todo lo que hubiera en las habitaciones. Me dio mucha curiosidad eso y escribí la obra de teatro y al escribirla decidí hacer la película. *La camarista*, digamos, es ya una visión muy personal que tiene que ver con la historia de mi país. A partir de que empecé a indagar y a generar a este personaje que se llama Eve, la protagonista de la película, adquirió una voz propia a diferencia de la obra de teatro, La película es propia, más personal.

### **Anteriormente habías dirigido teatro, ¿cómo fue tu experiencia de transferirlo al cine?**

Es algo completamente distinto. Digamos que lo que me gusta mucho, tanto en teatro como en cine, es la relación con los actores y no actores. Creo que mi principal objetivo como directora es generar esa relación con la gente, me gusta que el trabajo actoral sea meticuloso. Hay muchas personas que han visto mi película y me han dicho que parece casi documental. Quizás por una obsesión personal de encontrar la verdad y los secretos del personaje que se interpreta, aún bajo mi dirección, hay observación interna y me gusta proyectar lo que esa persona hace, siente, piensa y como actúa en la soledad de esos momentos de camarista.

### **¿Cuál dirías que es la diferencia entre los dos?**

El cine es donde más feliz me he sentido, como que hay un intercambio más fluido. El proceso del teatro es muy hermoso, pero cuando se acaba, se acaba. En el caso de la película, como hay tanto sacrificio y tantas horas de trabajo y de estar involucrada con tantas personas, cuesta trabajo dejarlo ir, es como dar a luz a un bebé. En este caso que fui directora, coproductora, coguionista y demás, son horas y horas de trabajo. Al final es un gran logro y un gran desprendimiento.



**¿Cuánto  
tiempo  
te llevó**

### **concretar la película?**

Tarde 7 años en poder hacerla y solo tuvimos 17 días de filmación. Todos han sido procesos complejos, pero por suerte tuve a una productora que me ha estado acompañando (Tatiana Graullera), mi editor (Omar Guzmán), mi diseñador sonoro (Guido Berenblum) que ha sido otro gran eslabón que me ayudó a reconstruir todo el sonido para que se escuchara increíble.

### **¿Cómo elegiste a tus actores?**

Vi a Gabriela Cartol, que es Eve, en la película *La tirisia* y me gust su rostro y su expresión corporal. Hicimos algunas lecturas. y sentí esa química que puede haber entre el actor o no actor y la persona que va a dirigir, en este caso yo. La mitad son no actores. Algunos cumplen con su trabajo real, hay un híbrido.

**No tuviste formación escolar como cineasta, lo cual no es extraño en estos medios.**

De toda la vida he sido cinéfila y mi otra pasión ha sido la fotografía, me obsesiona y me gusta muchísimo. Amo a **John Cassavetes**, Lucrecia Martel, **Luc Besson**, **Stanley Kubrick**, y obviamente **Bergman**.



## **Conoce a "La camarista", ¿la nueva promesa del cine mexicano?**

By **Redacción People en Español** | June 25, 2019 01:22 PM



Su nombre es **Gabriela Cartol** y es la protagonista de la cinta mexicana *La Camarista* que se estrena mañana en Estados Unidos. Dirigida por **Lila Avilés**, la cinta que ha sido reconocida en diversos festivales de cine, cuenta la triste historia de una camarista que trabaja en un lujoso hotel en Ciudad de México. La joven a pesar de hacer de todo por mejorar y evolucionar en su trabajo, no lo logra.

**¿Qué fue lo que te dejó tu papel en la cinta?**

Me dejó todo, de entrada no puedo dejar de ver a las camaristas, ya hay una relación que me de identifico y observo el trabajo [que hacen].

**¿Interactuaste con camaristas antes de hacer la cinta?**

No, en realidad tuvimos muy poco tiempo para rodar, el entrenamiento fue con la directora que llevaba muchos años trabajando en este proyecto, ella era como una camarista más. Ella sí tuvo mucho contacto con las camaristas.

### ¿Cómo fue le casting?

No fue tardado, hice el casting y empezamos a rodar, fueron 17 días de rodaje.

### ¿Por qué hay que ver esta cinta?

Es una película muy humana, la clase trabajadora se podrá identificar. Cuando una película es humana, llega. Esta cinta te va a adentrando a un universo sensible. Te meterá al universo del hotel y la audiencia ya está reclamando este tipo de cine. Me han llegado rumores que están hartos de los mismo temas.

### ¿Qué es lo que sigue para ti?

Esperamos que la gente reciba la cinta muy bien el público en Estados Unidos ha sido muy generoso. Esperamos que nos vaya muy bien y para mí, acabo de terminar la serie *Hernán* y terminé una pequeña participación de Ernesto Contreras.



CINE

## Lila Avilés le da voz a una empleada mexicana distinta en 'La camarista'





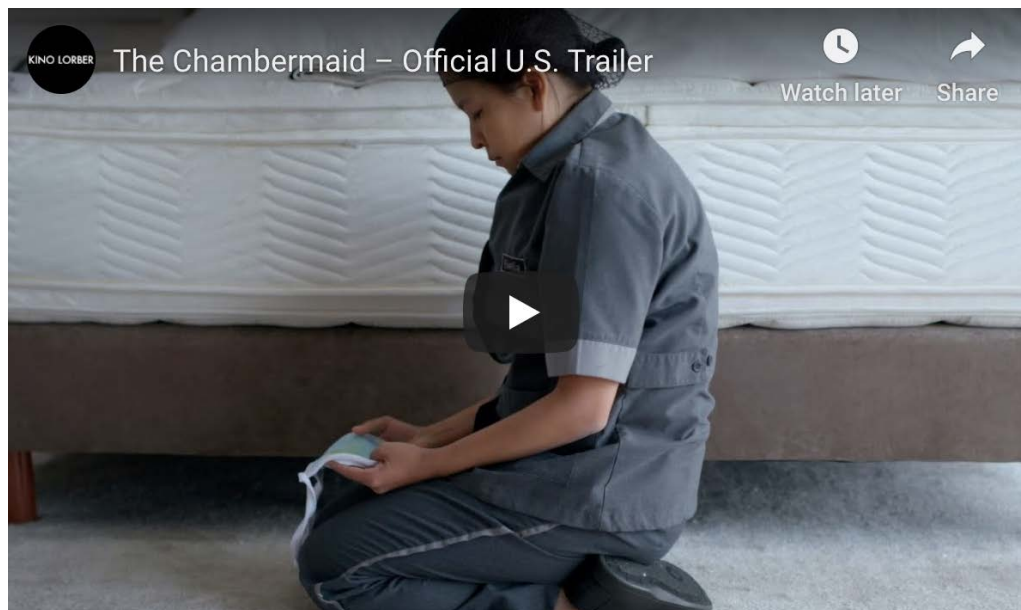
By [SERGIO BURSTEIN](#) WRITER

JULIO 5, 2019 3:46 PM

Aunque “La camarista” es su primer largometraje como realizadora cinematográfica, Lila Avilés tenía ya una amplia experiencia en los medios de comunicación antes de emprender este proyecto, porque trabajó como actriz y directora de teatro durante muchos años.

“Comencé de pequeña haciendo comerciales, pero hice mi carrera en el teatro, actuando y dirigiendo, aunque lo que más quería era hacer cine, porque siempre he sido muy cinéfila”, nos dijo la nativa de Ciudad de México. “Finalmente, tomé la decisión y decidí ser el paso, y me di cuenta de que esto es lo que quiero seguir haciendo”.

“La camarista”, que se estrenó este viernes con el título en inglés “The Chambermaid” en Laemmle Royal Theatre de L.A. y en Laemmle Playhouse 7 de Pasadena tras generar mucho entusiasmo en los festivales internacionales, surgió de un libro escrito por una empleada de hotel en Venecia que tomaba fotos de los objetos olvidados por los huéspedes; pero Avilés adoptó solo vagamente esa idea para construir un relato sobre una trabajadora de un hotel lujoso de la capital azteca que es madre soltera y se enfrenta a la soledad propia de su oficio.





Evelia, la protagonista de la cinta, es interpretada por Gabriela Cartosi, “una actriz espléndida y un ser humano increíble” (en palabras de Avilés) que ya tenía cierta experiencia cinematográfica pero que se enfrentó a la necesidad de ponerse en la piel de un personaje que ocupa permanentemente la pantalla y que actúa normalmente de manera muy tranquila y reservada, pero que es en realidad un volcán dormido.

“Me interesaba obtener un tratamiento muy realista, pero el teatro me ha enseñado a ser meticulosa con los actores, a estar muy cerca de ellos y a respetarlos mucho”, retomó nuestra entrevistada. “En persona, Gaby es muy graciosa y muy abierta, y yo le pedía todo lo contrario, pero sabía que había algo dentro de ella que podía darme eso”.

“La camarista” incluye varios comentarios sociales, como el modo en que estos trabajadores se enfrentan al desprecio de muchos de los huéspedes y a las dificultades que tienen para alcanzar un salario decente. Todo esto llega de la mano de un relato apacible que se inscribe en los lineamientos del cine de arte.

“Hay muchas formas de filmar una película en un hotel; yo podría haberle echado pólvora y lumbre, pero ese era un camino que no me interesaba; lo que me interesaba era seguir y entender al personaje, ponerme en sus zapatos de manera mucho más sutil”, dijo Avilés. “Pero también era importante que esto tuviera momentos divertidos, que el espectador se mantuviera atento”.

Es inevitable comparar a “La camarista” con “Roma”, la celebrada cinta de Alfonso Cuarón que tenía al frente a una empleada doméstica pero que manejaba el asunto de manera mucho más amable (y que fue creada por un hombre).

“Me parece súper importante que se hable de estos temas en el cine mexicano, porque tenemos que empezar a cambiar la mirada para ver no solo a los mismos personajes que hemos visto durante mucho tiempo, porque esta clase labores se están dando en todos lugares del mundo debido a los procesos de migración”, precisó Avilés.

Ella misma forma parte de una interesante generación de mujeres directoras que le están ofreciendo una sensibilidad distinta al séptimo arte.

“E incluso por ese lado, hay muchas opciones, porque necesitamos la mirada femenina rabiosa, la mirada femenina contenida, la mirada femenina salvaje, la mirada femenina sutil; tiene que llegar desde distintos puntos”, precisó. “Pero no que hay que rechazar a los hombres que hacen películas con protagonistas femeninas ni a las mujeres que quieren hacer lo opuesto, porque todas las perspectivas son valiosas”.



## The Chambermaid (2019) Movie Review: A Wonderfully Facile Character Study

Lila Aviles's directorial debut is incredibly thematic without being overtly so.

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By [Matthew St.Clair](#) on June 25, 2019 10:33 AM | [0 Comments](#)

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On the surface, it doesn't seem like *The Chambermaid* is about much. It's about a maid named Eve (Gabriela Cartol) who works at a high-end hotel and follows her day-to-day routine. In addition, the entire film takes place in the hotel. That being said, it is rather simplistic as it seems to make a statement without explicitly

saying anything at all. By presenting Eve's mundane routine, *The Chambermaid* appears to say something about class and the nature of working with the public.

As Eve is going from room to room on her assigned floor, she's flustered with the way the customers mess up their rooms. Eve rarely says anything but because she angrily cleans the clutter, it's evident that she feels the hotel guests are being neglectful. There are even a few guests that act neglectful and are the kind of customers that expect workers to move Heaven and Earth so that they can fulfill their wants. Since the guests are quite affluent, there's an even greater disconnect between Eve and them.

Because the film has one setting, it has a rather claustrophobic feel. Because Eve's life tends to revolve around her work, it feels like the hotel is the one world she knows. She even goes for her GED in a program provided by the hotel. As she's essentially trapped in that hotel, it makes the audience wonder whether she'll see life beyond the hotel and escape the confines of her occupation. Can she finally leave behind those wealthy guests that make her feel like a subordinate?

Ironically, the character of Eve herself feels rather underwritten. There are glimpses of her home life yet they're still just glimpses. Lead actress Gabriela Cartol still attempts to give her some complexity by playing into her demure nature so Eve can quietly process everything around her while letting her frustrated folding of clothes illustrate the stress she feels over her situation. Also, Teresa Sanchez provides spunky comic relief as Minitoy, Eve's fellow maid who acts as her comrade.

Along with the main character being underwritten, the steady pace almost becomes a hindrance since the movie sometimes feels longer than it is. Despite those flaws, though, *The Chambermaid* is still an effective demonstration of class and the service industry under the guise of a character study. Thanks to the efforts of writer/director Lila Aviles, it makes its fair share of points without spelling them out for the audience which makes it all the more admirable.



## Exclusive Trailer for 'The Chambermaid' Explores Lives of Luxury Through the Eyes of Mexico City's Working Class

✍ Written by Jordan Raup on May 28, 2019

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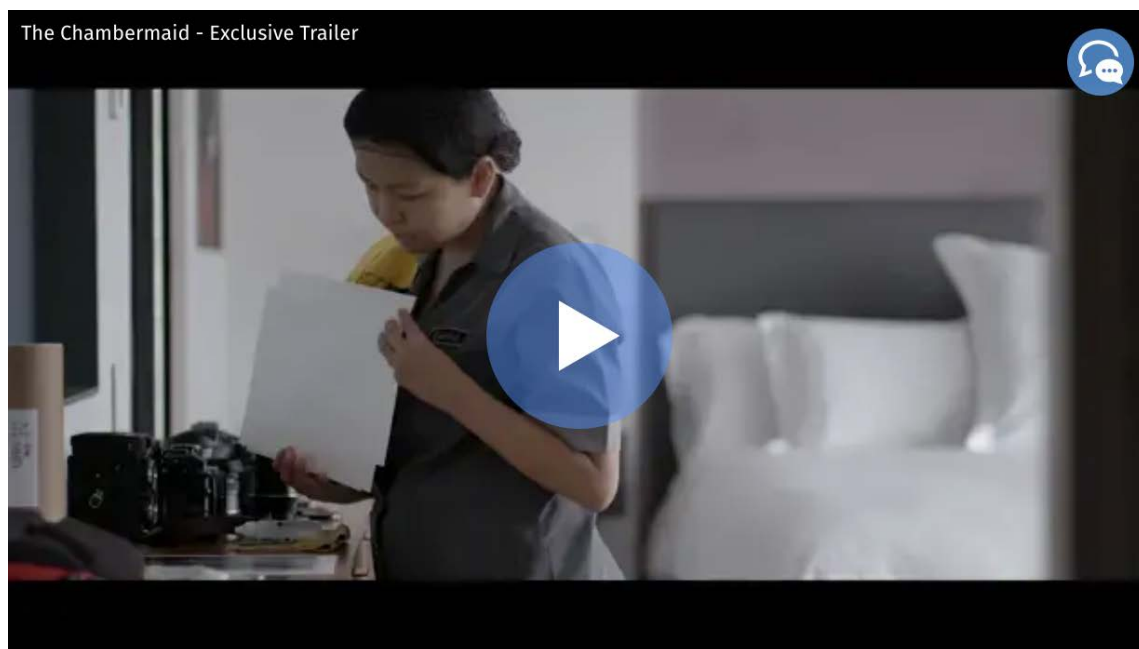


One of the most striking directorial debuts of the year is Lila Avilés's *The Chambermaid* which invites a keen look at the class divide in a luxury Mexico City hotel. Brimming with humanity, we follow Evelina (Gabriela Cartol), a chambermaid as she balances her workload, her dreams, and her fantasies dozens of stories above her home life which, in a clever decision, we never see. After a festival tour including TIFF, ND/NF, AFI Fest, San Francisco Film Festival (where it won the top prize), and Morelia Film Festival (where it won Best Mexican Film), Kino Lorber will release it next month and we're pleased to premiere the U.S. trailer and poster.

In [our review](#) from the Toronto International Film Festival (which is also quoted in the trailer), John Fink said, "*The Chambermaid* offers a sometimes funny and playful look into the inner life of Eve; nuanced and natural, it has a quiet and modest power as it comments on the ironies of contemporary cities like Mexico City and their growing economic divide."

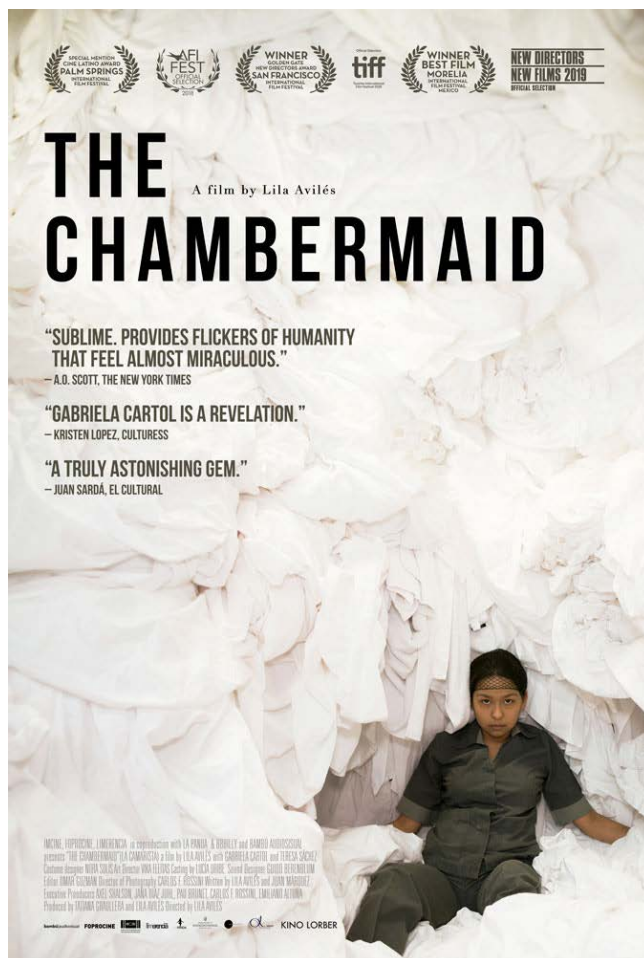
"*The Chambermaid* was born a long time ago...it began as a theater piece," the director says. "The first seed that triggered this project was the book of the visual artist and photographer Sophie Calle, called *Hotel*. Sophie Calle started working as a chambermaid in a hotel in Venice. She was like a spy and took photos of all objects, trash and clothing that guests were leaving in their rooms, understanding their behavior and personality through their belongings. I liked that feeling of voyeurism, imagining the lives of others from the remains and the absence."

See our trailer premiere below, along with the poster.



Eve is a young chambermaid working in one of the most luxurious hotels in Mexico City, an exclusive glass tower inhabited by guests so wealthy she can only imagine their lives through intimate fantasies of the belongings they've left behind.

Long work shifts prevent Eve from caring for her own child while she helps guests with their own children, but she believes her situation will improve if she gets promoted to work at the executive-level suites. So she accepts a grueling schedule and enrolls in the hotel's adult education program. A budding friendship with her coworker and an awkward, silent flirtation with an inaccessible window-washer prod her toward much needed bravery. But when things don't go as planned, Eve transforms her lonely explorations and newfound courage into the necessary strength to face a life outside the glimmering tower.





« All Features

# 10 Films to See in June

✍ Written by Jordan Raup on June 3, 2019

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## 5. *The*

***Chambermaid* (Lila Avilés; June 12)**



One of the most striking directorial debuts of the year is Lila Avilés's *The Chambermaid* which invites a keen look at the class divide in a luxury Mexico City hotel. Brimming with humanity, we follow Evelina (Gabriela Cartol), a chambermaid as she balances her workload, her dreams, and her fantasies dozens of stories above her home life which, in a clever decision, we never see. In [our review](#) from the Toronto International Film Festival, John Fink said, "*The Chambermaid* offers a sometimes funny and playful look into the inner life of Eve; nuanced and natural, it has a quiet and modest power as it comments on the ironies of contemporary cities like Mexico City and their growing economic divide."





« All Features

# 40 Films to See This Summer

✍ Written by The Film Stage on April 24, 2019

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***Photograph* (Ritesh Batra; May 17)**

***The***

***Chambermaid* (Lila Aviles; June 12)**



Set entirely within the confines of a luxurious Mexico City hotel, mostly in rooms and service corridors, *The Chambermaid* is a fascinating observational drama and occasional allegory for the haves and have-nots. Gabriela Cartol stars as Evelina, a 24-year old single mother working on her GED in a program provided (and later canceled) by the hotel's union. Like *Blue Crush*, another film that contained explicit scenes of hotel maids cleaning up after guests, *The Chambermaid* doesn't shy away from the usual demands of the job, from a guest who insists on having his room stocked with five times the amenities he needs to a wealthy Argentina woman who calls Eveline to her room to essentially

babysit. When her son takes to Eveline, she's given a tentative offer to leave the hotel behind for a new life in Argentina. — John F. ([full review](#))



« All Features »

## Posterized June 2019: 'The Last Black Man in San Francisco,' 'Our Time,' 'The Chambermaid,' and More

Written by Jared Mobarak on June 7, 2019

### On white



...

I'm not on-board with the italicized "Rose", though, since it inherently separates the titles' two words further than kerning should allow. I get why they did it—the right side angle now matches that of the left side "W"—but it's more distracting than appealing.

The best use of white this month is *The Chambermaid* (limited June 26). It's off-white like *Anna* so we see every fold and crease of the fabric piled behind the woman sitting below. By refusing to let us

see context with a wider look at the room, the poster creates its own sort of optical illusion by simultaneously seeming as though she is inside a cave and outside a wall. We want to enter the frame and figure out which is true, risking a reality wherein the mounds will fall down upon us.

Credit its use of typography too as the sans serif font is more playful with its curves than stoic with rigidity. The “Hs” line-up perfectly so the whole remains on a faux grid and therefore proves easier on our eyes even if the “A” is pushed farther right than the “E” above it should allow. There’s as much care towards its legibility as its attractiveness.



By [Eric Lavallée](#)

Published on June 6, 2019

IONCINEMA.com's IONCINEPHILE of the Month feature focuses on an emerging creator from the world of cinema. This June, we are pleased to introduce filmmaker **Lila Avilés** and her debut feature film *The Chambermaid* (*La camarista*) which debuted at 2018 edition of the Toronto Intl. Film Festival. Starring Gabriela Cartol, Kino Lorber [opens](#) the film on Friday, June 26th at the Film Forum in New York City. As per usual, make sure to check out the second portion of this profile – where Lila [lists her top ten films](#) (perhaps more) of all time.

## Lila Avilés

Eric Lavallée: *During your childhood ... what films were important to you?*

Lila Avilés: When I was young I spent much of my childhood in [Cuernavaca](#) (a small town near Mexico City). There my uncle had a huge black and white VHS collection of Mexican films, mostly from [Mexican Cine de Oro](#), such as “*Escuela de Vagabundos*” Rogelio A González, “*Macario*” Roberto Gavaldón, “*Dos Tipos de Cuidado*” Ismael

Rodriguez, and “[Marcelino Pan y Vino](#)” Ladislao Vajda — this one impressed me a lot. I’m was also a fan of “*The Sound of Music*” and all the characters of “*The Wizard of Oz*”. We didn’t had so many films at home, so animated films such as “*Dumbo*” and “*Pete’s Dragon*” were ones we’d watch repeatedly.

Lavallée: *During your formative years, what films and filmmakers inspired you and could you name some Mexican films/filmmakers that influenced you as well.*

Avilés: My favorite filmmakers are Cassavetes, Martel, Bergman, Herzog, Bela Tarr, Kubrick and Kaurismaki. Because I didn’t have any formal training, my real school was [Cineteca Nacional](#), the cinematheque in Mexico City. They bring films from everywhere, and it opened up my horizons.

The tickets were really inexpensive, so it was cinema for everyone. It’s the cine cathedral. You sort of develop different personalities as a teenager when you see films that were shown there. I remember I saw the French film “*La Haine*” there, I felt I was a tough cookie. Then I became a spiritual being from the documentaries of Herzog, and then I felt like a sweetie after having viewed *Amelie*. Personally, an important and precious moment was when I discovered “*La Ciénaga*” from Martel, I felt that I was just the normal and simple Lila Avilés to then understanding something profound about myself. From there I thought..I want to direct!

Another great place was VIDEODROMO, it was full of DVDs for rent, and really well organized. I loved that place, it was my perfect weekend. It was like when you walk into a bookstore, you felt that the books choose you. This was a long time ago. From Mexico there were several films that left a mark on me. “[Cabeza de Vaca](#)” Nicolas Echeverría, then “*Cronos*” Del Toro, and of course “*Amores Perros*” from Iñárritu, and Cuarón’s “*Y tu Mama También*”, “*Temporada de Patos*” Fernando Eimbke, “*Luz Silenciosa*” and “*Post Tenebras Lux*” Reygadas, “*Hel*” Amat Escalante, Michel Franco and the documentaries, “*Tempestad*” Tatiana Huezo, and “*Eco de la Montaña*” Nicolas Echeverría. “*Una Corriente Salvaje*” Nuria Ibañez. A lot of great Mexican films and filmmakers!!

Lavallée: *You began your career by acting — I was wondering if the choice to both write and direct was something that was part of the master plan and how has acting informed you about your approach/working method with actors for The Chambermaid and future films?*

Avilés: I’m really curious. I couldn’t imagine only acting and ... that’s it. It’s something about the creative process, and for a long time I knew I wanted to direct, but you know, if you don’t study cinema, you just don’t know until you verify it. My

strength is to always work with my intuition, if you connect with that, you can connect with others. Personally, working with people is powerful, it's this aspect in which I appreciate the most. People that are grounded, that I can travel with, that I can share with, regardless if it's for a film. For me it began by working in theatre and yet I had this sentiment that something was missing in the work. Now I know where my happy place is and it is a perfect connection between humans, photography, sound and story-telling.

Lavallée: *From a technical aspect, what was the most difficult sequence to film for [The Chambermaid](#)?*

Avilés: All the long sequences of the hotel corridors, because the real light of the hotel was difficult to work with and we were working with the hotel that was operational — so we cannot change them, and we had to deal with the hotel's clients which was kind of tricky. For example, in the sequence with the glass cleaner — the client was outside the room.

Lavallée: *Can you discuss the collaborative process you had with your Editor, [Omar Guzmán](#)...*

Avilés: Omar has a really good taste in cinema and I like his creative approach as well. We needed to do a rough assemblage in one month to gain further funds for post-production. He delivered the goods by synchronizing and organizing all the material! Once we obtained those funds, we edited together, but for me that previous edit was the crucial. He truly gave everything for the film. He is also a director, he has a documentary directed with Ricardo Silva, called *William the Judo Teacher*.

Lavallée: *Can you discuss the collaborative process you had with your Cinematographer, [Carlos Rossini](#) ...*

Avilés: When I met [Tatiana Graullera](#), the producer, she showed me some cinematographers, but what I really liked about Rossini, is that he come from a documentary background. I love photography, but I also love people. So I don't like to work with cinematographers that spend so much time in lighting. When I started talking with him, I immediately knew he was the one. We filmed for only seventeen days, and that was it. So I'm really proud that we were a great creative match! We understand each other very well, from the first moment I knew that I wanted to film long sequences on longer takes and he trusted in that point of view.

Lavallée: *Can you discuss the collaborative process you had with your sound designer, [Guido Berenblum](#)...*

Avilés: My real sound was a mess. My script had so much notes about sound design that I thought no one would be able to understand what I was looking for in terms of sound. So I was really afraid about that part. So when the co-producers boarded the project, I told them that I really wanted to work with Guido Berenblum, the sound designer of Lucrecia Martel. I had that one request. We would return to record several times in that hotel and then I flew out to Argentina to work with Guido and Gerardo — it was a difficult but amazing experience.





IONCINEPHILE OF THE MONTH

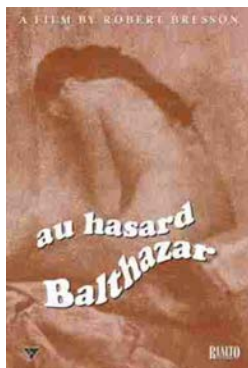
## IONCINEPHILE of the Month: Lila Aviles' Top Ten Films of All Time List



By [Eric Lavallée](#)

Published on June 6, 2019

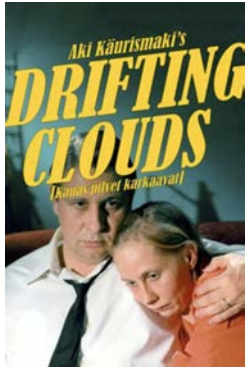
Have you ever wondered what are the films that inspire the next generation of visionary filmmakers? As part of our monthly [IONCINEPHILE profile this June](#), we ask the filmmaker (this month: **Lila Avilés**) to identify their all time top ten favorite films. Avilés' *The Chambermaid* is receiving its release on Friday, June 26th at the Film Forum in New York City via the Kino Lorber folks. We have a list that exceeds the ten mark, so in no particular order, here are top fourteen films of all time as of June 2019.



*Au Hasard Balthazar* – Robert Bresson (1966)



*Barry Lyndon* – Stanley Kubrick (1975)



*Drifting Clouds* – Aki Kaurismäki (1996) / *The Man Without a Past*  
(2002)



*Fanny and Alexander* – Ingmar Bergman (1982)



*Fitzcarraldo* – Werner Herzog (1982)

*In The Mood For Love* – Wong Kar Wai (2000) / *Days of Being Wild*  
(1990)



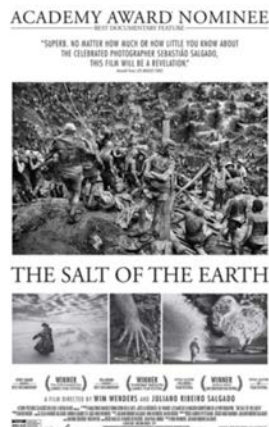
*La Ciénaga* – Lucrecia Martel (2001)



*Love Streams* – John Cassavetes (1984)



*Nostalgia* – Andrei Tarkovsky (1983)



*The Salt of the Earth* – Wim Wenders (2014)



*Songs from the Second Floor* – Roy Andersson (2000)



*The Turin Horse* – Bela Tarr (2011)





Reviews

## THE CHAMBERMAID – Review by Roxana Hadadi

📅 June 20, 2019 🧑 Roxana Hadadi 0 Comments 📍 Gabriela Cartol, Lila Avilés, mexican films, the chambermaid

High above Mexico City, more than 20 floors above the ground, Eve (Gabriela Cartol) works with her whole body. She dashes across hotel rooms, leaning over to pick up trash. She perches in the bathroom, scrubbing away. She smooths sheets and blankets with her entire upper half, making a 90-degree angle with the bed. Her responsibilities are highly regimented and take an immense physical toll, but you wouldn't know that from her polite small talk or her demure "Excuse me" when she leaves a room. Eve has been trained to serve and to be ignored.

The hotel where Eve works—and where director Lila Avilés stages most nearly all of *The Chambermaid*, venturing outside only for a few brief moments—is a high-end establishment where the employees, nearly all women, have created their own social universe. Certain groups of friends always eat lunch together. Others meet for a GED training class. A few women have side hustles, pushily trying to sell their coworkers lotions, plastic food containers, toys, and other trinkets for extra cash. All a bustling ecosystem, but one which Eve avoids. She barely eats, often only grabbing a bag of popcorn. She doesn't gossip. The only time she comes alive is when she sneaks away to call back home, 2 hours away, where her 4-year-old son is being cared for by another woman. While she works endlessly to provide for him, she barely sees him.

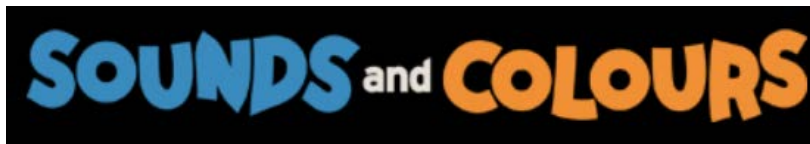
*The Chambermaid* focuses primarily on Eve's experiences, tracking the detail of her labor and how fully she immerses herself in the promise of a better life for herself and for her son. Maybe if she is polite enough, she'll be given a red dress from the lost and found that she's coveted for weeks. Maybe if she's friendly enough, she'll make a few friends to help the days pass faster. Maybe if she helps out enough, she'll be given her own floor to clean, the new 42nd floor, a marker of status within the hotel.



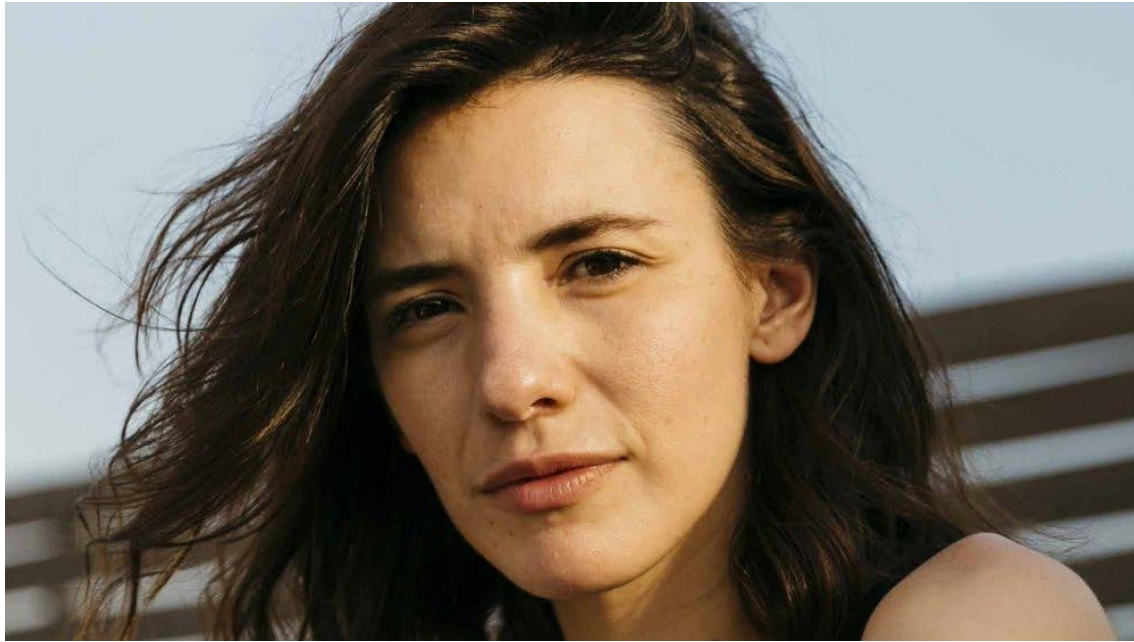
But all of that would occur in a fair or just world, and Avilés makes it clear that reality doesn't work like that. Avilés often shoots scenes by placing the camera in one location and not moving it, forcing us to instead view how thoroughly Eve exerts herself. In the film's opening scene, she darts around an exploded-looking hotel room, throwing trash in a bag, unclogging a toilet, and tidying up, when she realizes the room's occupant is passed out on the floor. She tries to offer help, but he ignores her. He won't make eye contact or speak with her. He gestures at her to leave. And instead of following Eve as she quietly exits, the camera stays in the same location, watching the man's disinterested face. He is almost disgusted by her presence, by the idea that he interact with someone lesser-than, and that same condescension runs through experiences with other hotel guests, from a man who hordes the free amenities and asks for extra lotion and small bath towels to a woman who asks Eve to watch her son so she can shower. All of these people asking for Eve to bend the rules just for them, with no consideration of her humanity in the process.

The Chambermaid reinforces again and again how isolating this environment is for Eve, and Cartol communicates that with her own performance, which is closed-off for so long that the film's final moments don't land with quite the intended impact. Eve speaks so infrequently to other characters and communicates her own desires so haltingly that the distance she feels from others we feel as viewers, too. Still, certain moments are immensely powerful. Her look of unperturbed calm as she settles down with her first book, contrasted with her fear and mania when she unexpectedly stains hotel linens with her blood, demonstrate what Eve personally values versus the exceptionally high standard that she must maintain. Those glimmers of who Eve is outside of work help clarify the way she acts as an employee, but because The Chambermaid only takes place within that hotel environment, there's a limitation to how much of this character we truly understand.

Still, The Chambermaid makes clear that what Eve wants is so recognizable that it's almost ordinary: an education for herself, a better life for her son, a feeling that she has accomplished something. And how the film counters those ambitions makes for an alternately bleak and reverent viewing experience, leaving us with an understanding of what we really mean when we say "women's work."







## THE COMMUNION OF CINEMA: AN INTERVIEW WITH LILA AVILÉS

By [Aurelie Knecht](#) | 24 July, 2019

Lila Avilés is a Mexican actress and film-maker, born in 1982 in Mexico City. She studied performing arts, screenplay writing and film-making. As a kid, she always knew she wanted to be a film-maker. Even though she began her career as an actress, as time passed, her passion for film-making grew, and in 2018, she directed her first movie, *The Chambermaid* [in UK cinemas from July 26th]. We met in the wonderful Cineteca Nacional in Mexico City to talk about her work, which narrates the everyday life of Eve, a chambermaid in a luxurious hotel in the Mexican capital.

### What were the inspirations behind your movie?

It was 8 years ago that I saw a book by the visual artist Sophie Calle called *Hotel*. This book is made up of pictures of belongings of the hosts in an hotel in Venezia, and it piqued my curiosity. At that time, I participated in a film-making workshop and did a small play of 10 minutes about the book. Later, I became more and more curious and I did a whole theatre play. And then, even more curious, I decided to do the movie. It has been a great benediction for me, as *The Chambermaid* has been progressing almost on its own, the movie first and myself just behind. It came to live in an honest and friendly manner.

### Are the characters based on real-life people?

Well, everything is fiction, it is not a documentary, but there are a lot of realistic elements. From the moment I decided to make a movie and to write the script with my co-writer Juan Carlos Marquez, I was

interested in having a truly authentic approach. As I spent a whole season living with chambermaids, all my documentation about how they clean, how they organise themselves, everything is real, but on the other hand the characters are all fiction.

**How did you choose the actors?**

I really enjoy going to the movies, I am a true cinephile. I like this sense of reality in cinema, and thus I'm not a fan of always seeing the same actors over and over again, because in the end, I don't buy into it anymore (laughs). For me, it was really important to mix actors and non-actors. The main character, Eve, is a professional actress, and even though she appeared in many movies, she had never played such a protagonist character. I was really interested in finding this truth. I did the casting with Lucia Uribe, which was the casting director but also my best friend, and in that way, we were accomplices in which kind of person we really, truly wanted. In some cases, the actors were the same people that worked in the hotel, in other cases, they were people from real life, that we saw and knew that they would be perfect for the role. Interestingly, it generated a really beautiful synergy. Professional actors adapted to non-professional actors and vice versa, in such an empowering way. What one lacked was filled up by the other and therefore, it allowed an amazing complementarity to happen that I would like to keep building in different movies.

**So you are planning on doing more movies?**

Yes yes yes. I want to be a film-maker. I loved it.

**Do you have specific ideas about your next movies?**

I do, but I'm still in the financing process, therefore it is really early to talk about the next movie. As I have almost always wanted to be a film-maker, I now have many stories written. I just need to know which one goes first, which next, but yes, I want to keep doing that for the rest of my life.

**You worked for a long time in theatre. Did this 'theatrical universe' have an influence on the movie?**

I think that the convention for theatre and the convention for film are completely different. Of course, there are movies made by film-makers that have a background in theatre and that mix elements from cinema and theatre. I believe that as long as the convention is rightly exposed and that there is a certain consistency, the form or the format doesn't really matter. To what concerns *The Chambermaid*, I was looking for something strongly realistic, almost closer to the documentary, that in this way is quite distant and different from the theatre I made.

Thanks to my experience in theatre, I have been really meticulous in my work with actors and non-actors. It is necessary to give them a lot of attention and all the freedom possible, but at the same time to give them all the respect and care they deserve. The relationship [of the] director-actor is one about love, about care.

**Could you tell me more about your choice of filming the whole movie in only one place – the hotel?**

I don't want to give spoilers, but well, there are so many now anyways... (laughs). For me, since the very beginning, since the creation of the script, it was a story of a unique location. The container of the hotel was really important to me. Maybe in the formal vision of cinematographic productions, if I would have presented the project like that, nobody would have wanted it. But I knew it had to be that way, and that it had to be very punctual because this is how the story is.

**Could you also tell me more about your decision to not include music in the movie?**

Thanks to the theatre, I also worked in operas and in dance. Therefore, there has always been something special about music for me, something that I find particularly powerful. Indeed, music is so powerful that it can completely transform a moment. I'm not telling that it is the case in every movie, obviously each one is different, but in that sense, I had the certitude that I did not want to use music. I had the chance to work with Guido Berenblum, who is the musical designer of *Lucrecia Martel*, and together we built a sound architecture, a sound design that would surround you whole. There is something in these machines and these atmospheres that is not to be heard but to be felt. This process has been beautiful. Let's see what happens with the next movie (laughs). At least for this one I knew it would be that way.

**Were you prepared for the international success the movie received?**

No, not at all. Making the movie was a dream in itself. While I was filming, I had these moments of great joy when I could not believe it, when I told myself, 'I am doing it.' When the movie began to travel and to connect with people, I realized that there is something universal in its simplicity, and it makes me the happiest.

**You said to me earlier that the *The Chambermaid* had something very Mexican in its essence. Can you tell me more about it?**

Mexico is a complex country. It has a lot of layers. One talks a lot about violence, about all that is happening, but I am personally more interested in other aspects. Some days, I have to wake up early, and as I leave the house, the man selling orange juice around the corner is already there, there is already a whole army of hard-working people on the streets. And this is the pillar of a country, and it moves me deeply. This is why it was important for me to talk about it. The movie also has many layers in the way that it is the story of a chambermaid, but it is also a story of hard-work. We all are completely obsessed about achieving, doing, satisfying, escalating and escalating, no matter what, that life escapes us. Therefore, I think that we should talk about such topics, not only to inspire empathy or a certain affinity, but also to give them more importance.

**Would you say that there is a certain feminine approach to your movie?**

In the small journey of *The Chambermaid*, there is indeed something really feminine, I suppose so, because I am a woman. I come from a hard-working mother, that carries her own story, her own fight, and I have myself been a mother very young. Thus, there is something there, whether we want it or not, that pushes us film-makers [to] make the stories we usually make. I even believe that if tomorrow I make a movie with someone else's script, I will have to rewrite some parts, because I will have to find myself in the journey.

The film editor, Omar Guzman, while we were editing the movie he was intrigued by some details, some details of the 'feminine universe' he said. But the feminine universe also entails the masculine universe, doesn't it. Today, it seems important to me to talk about these visions of the world, not only about the feminine, but about all of them. I think that it is about finding a balance. Both points of view are important – how a woman sees a man and how a man sees a woman, and this exchange is fundamental because to make and understand a conversation, it takes two people. Otherwise, one withdraws into oneself and there is no mirroring, and in the end, what I am looking for is this exact mirroring.

**Is there a moment that particularly impacted you in the movie?**

The moments I preferred were when the two main characters were together, Eve and Minitoy. It inspired in me a love for life, a deep and profound joy. Each moment has its own and particular strength, but these held a special joy within them that was transmitted between the two actresses and me. There is something subtle and beautiful that is part of the magic of filming. I can imagine the life of the painter, in his solitude or in his stories. In the film-making process, there are more accomplices, and this is what makes it so special to me.

**What was it that you enjoyed the most about making the movie?**

I always associate the film-making process to be a pleasant trip. In a trip, either you make more friends, or you break friendships and you hate your companions. Sometimes, a good trip with the right people can be a total revelation. In this sense, what I particularly enjoyed in this first movie was to feel guided. Obviously, there are moments of doubt, but I felt strong, like in an empathetic trip (laughs). I hope to keep seeking these travelling companions that ensure that the trip is not a complete disaster, and one doesn't want to go back home. One always has to be careful with its companions (laughs).

**Do you have any favourite movie director?**

I really like Cassavetes, Lucrecia Martel, Bergman, Peter Anderson, Bresson, well the big ones. I really like the approximation they have to cinema. Their journey as movie directors seems really powerful to me and really consistent. There is something special for me that makes me always want to go back to these movies, that always excites me. I can watch them a thousand times and I never get bored.

**Did you want to leave your movie open to various interpretations?**

Well yes, since the script it was this way. In the end, something I really appreciate about books is that when one reads, there is the interpretation one can do of what the words say, the interpretation of what one is reading and that carries its own story, and the interpretation of the one reading while picturing themselves as the author and thinking what there is behind the subtexts. I like to see the cinema as a book, because even if there are many things that are said, and there are layers, there is this subtlety. Sometimes, there are anecdotes in movies that can be a bit closed and quite stable. In our times of images that move and change so fast, where there

is so much to be seen in just a fraction of second, I think that inviting the spectator to be present is an interesting exercise. In that way, one gets closer to its inner self. I don't want to sound intellectual because I don't want to intellectualize my movie, it is not the way it is meant to be, but I do believe that it has to do with being present and doing an active exercise of finding oneself in it. At one point, there was this really beautiful moment when a man came to me and told me that he really enjoyed jazz. After seeing my movie, he said he wanted to go back and play with his band (laughs). And these are the beautiful parts about cinema. It is just a story about a hotel, it has nothing to do with jazz, but this man made this comment. To me, this is the absolute point of it all.

### **Do you have a last comment to add?**

Cinema is important, culture is important, the sense of community it generates is magic. When someone goes to the movies, something really beautiful happens. One begins to laugh, and then the whole cinema is laughing, and there is a sense of communion. It is like with football, it is not the same to see the game alone, than with a group of friends, than in the stadium. There are completely different experiences. Therefore, in this time of ours where we all are more and more individualistic, I think that the communion that cinema can generate is really beautiful.

***The Chambermaid*** is currently screening in US cinemas (details at [kinolorber.com](http://kinolorber.com)), and will be at select UK cinemas from 26th July (screening details at [newwavefilms.co.uk](http://newwavefilms.co.uk))

Watch the trailer for *The Chambermaid* below:





# THE CHAMBERMAID

By [Rocio Cadena](#) | 12 July, 2019

Lila Aviles' debut film **The Chambermaid** (*La Camarista*) starts out strongly by introducing a quiet, mousy Eve that dutifully cleans, scrubs and organizes one messy luxurious hotel room after another. Immediately, the viewer feels like one is peering into the protagonist's mundane work routine, as if observing without her knowledge or permission. This sensation may appear to be intrusive or even boring at first. How interesting can the life of a hotel maid be, after all? But one gets the feeling that due to Eve's stoic nature, she wouldn't mind us watching her unfolding working life. And, surprisingly, we are delighted to learn just how alive and full Eve's inner life is, despite how dull her external reality seems at first glance.

Curiosity drives Eve's cleaning routine. The way she enters each room and carefully inspects it along with the items left by guests is probably akin to how an anthropologist goes about exploring a newly excavated site. Eve picks up each belonging and slowly examines it, as if she's never seen that particular thing before, even if it's a book. That child-like wonder in her eyes is warm and lovely, and makes the audience forget that she's there to do hard menial labor work. Eve's first order of business is to go through the trash to see if any treasures have been left behind and if so, she promptly stores them in her pocket to keep as special souvenirs and continues with her meticulous cleaning.

*The Chambermaid* explores how our objects and belongings define us. Every time Eve encounters an item, she analyzes it with such Zen-like attention and intensity. It's clear she's trying to imagine the foreign lives of the wealthy guests staying at the high-end hotel she works for. There is a guest who is a photographer and Eve tries hard to make sense of the analog photographs left in the room. This theme is based on conceptual artist and photographer Sophie Calle's book *L'Hotel*, a project for which Calle worked as a maid in a Venice hotel and took photographs of the guests' personal possessions to try to understand their behavior and personality. In a statement, Aviles talks about this notion and says, "I liked that feeling of voyeurism, imagining the lives of others from the remains and the absence."

Aside from working arduous hours, we learn Eve is full of dreams and hopes, even if they seem modest. She wants a beautiful red dress left behind by a guest. Eve would like a promotion to work in the 42nd executive suites floor so she enrolls in the hotel's adult education program to advance her chances. Her teacher lends her a book and it's obvious she enjoys the reading material as much as she enjoys learning in class. She also engages in a flirtatious game with a window washer that culminates in a peculiar way.

Despite Eve's intimate fantasizing, the film's minimal and austere aesthetic reminds viewers of the stark reality Eve actually inhabits. She works day in day out for a luxury hotel full of capricious rich guests that want what they want, and want it now with little to no consideration for Eve the person. Some guests demand towels and shampoo daily while ignoring Eve, others need her to care for their infant child, while others need her to operate the elevator during Shabbat. Meanwhile, Eve doesn't have running water at home and she barely spends time with her 4-year-old son Ruben since she spends the majority of her time at work, or commuting two hours to and fro.

Aviles states that the hotel is the other main character. An imposing, impersonal, claustrophobic character that acts as a high-class prison for working-class Eve. The entirety of the movie is set inside the glass and concrete building and we only get glimpses of the outside world through the windows and the final scene. *The Chambermaid* is a great analogy for modern Mexican and Latin American society – showcasing the severe disparity between the leisurely lifestyles of the affluent guests and the poor staff working ungodly hours to support and provide basic necessities for their families.

By viewing the world through Eve's lens for nearly two hours, Aviles invites us to step into the shoes of an almost invisible cohort of people – the working class. The people that clean our tables at restaurants, that care for our children, that maintain our lawns. The sensitive and empathetic portrayal of Eve serves to humanize the often unseen and overlooked working masses. As the daughter of incredibly hard-working and resilient Mexican parents, seeing Eve go about her day



with such grace and poise despite day-to-day struggles was touching and helped envision (and relate to) my parents' manual labor working lives.

Hopefully other viewers have a similar experience. *The Chambermaid* gently but powerfully reminds us that if we're watching the film, we likely possess a degree of privilege that Eve and her colleagues are not privy to. Eve's coworkers are bona fide hustlers, trying to make extra cash by selling tupperware, lotions and toys on the job. Anything to make some extra money and provide for the family.

But Aviles' debut isn't just about the struggles of the working class, it is also about the relationships and social dynamics that ensue at the hotel. Between staff and amid staff and guests. Eve is initially timid and takes a while to open up and form true friendships with her coworkers but we see her grow in this domain. She also forms an unexpected bond with a chatty Argentinian mom who needs help with her newborn. Initially, the film's documentary-like qualities portray Eve's life as monotonous. And it is, but only to a certain extent. Eve's life is richer and deeper than a lot of the guests' shallow interiors. By the end of the film, Eve has experienced enough to grow braver and more courageous to step outside her daydreaming and face the concrete, and oftentimes harsh, world outside the hotel's walls.

***The Chambermaid* is currently screening in US cinemas (details at [kinolorber.com](https://kinolorber.com)), and will be at select UK cinemas from 26th July (screening details at [newwavefilms.co.uk](https://newwavefilms.co.uk))**



## The Chambermaid: Dirty Pretty Things, by David Bax

BY · PUBLISHED JUNE 26, 2019 · UPDATED JUNE 29, 2019



Hotels, especially luxury hotels, must be odd places to work. People scraping by on low wages grind through their workdays while occupying the same space as rich folks on vacation or traveling for their comparatively cushy jobs. That's probably why there have been so many movies on the subject, from France (Benoît Jacquot's *A Single Girl*; Pascale Ferran's *Bird People*) to England (Stephen Frears' *Dirty Pretty Things*) to the United States (Wayne Wang's *Maid in Manhattan*). Now, with Lila Avilés' stunning debut feature *The Chambermaid*, we can add Mexico to that list.

Eve (Gabriela Cartol) is a single mother who travels by bus two hours each way to work every day cleaning rooms at one of the fanciest hotels in Mexico City. Those details about her life outside of work are only gradually pieced together, though, since Avilés camera never leaves the hotel grounds. All we see of Eve is the part of her life where she not only works but takes GED-type classes, eats lunch, pines for items left behind in the lost and found and occasionally calls home to check on her son.

*The Chambermaid* can't be said to have a plot so much as a rhythm. Momentum is built through our growing familiarity with Eve's processes and rituals, both mandated (smoothing the covers of a freshly made bed with her broom handle) and

private (ferreting pieces of popcorn away inside empty mint wrappers and lining them up along the window in the employee bathroom).

Avilés also creates a sense of forward motion aesthetically. Her tight, widescreen frame is almost comically at odds with the open, modernist high rise in which Eve toils. Stocking bathrooms with towels and toiletries, she repeatedly ducks in and out of the unmoving frame. These guidelines shift almost imperceptibly over time, though. What seems to be a strict rule against close-ups is eventually tested, if not broken. And, in one of the most striking moments, the heretofore unwavering gray and white color palette of the hotel is dashed when Eve gets a look at the soft reds and the warm wood of the penthouse suite.

That same understated confidence, along with a perfectly pitched performance by Cartol, is what gives the film its simmering tension. Eve's fellow employees play a game in which they see how long they can hold onto a metal rod with a slowly increasing current of electricity running through it. *The Chambermaid* often feels just like that masochistic lark; something bad could befall Eve or any of her financially insecure colleagues at any moment and it's forever possible that it's already begun to happen without us or them realizing it.

As formally sound and rich as *The Chambermaid* is, Eve's precariousness is the real, political heart of the movie. As we witness her guarded reserve in her work life, punctured by the warm extrovert she becomes when on the phone with her son or a friend, we understand that navigating the miniature hierarchies imposed by capitalism—not vacuuming or cleaning toilets—is her real job. And hard work and concepts like “deserve” have distressingly little to do with where any of us find ourselves at the end of the day.

## Review: THE CHAMBERMAID Is An Elegant And Subtle Film Packed With Emotion

By Sean Boelman JULY 1, 2019



### FIRST IMPRESSION

*The Chambermaid* isn't perfect, but its simple yet elegant story and execution make it a film that cinephiles won't want to miss.

4



OVERALL SCORE

Writing	★★★★☆
Directing	★★★★☆
Acting	★★★★☆
Technical Merit	★★★★☆

The Chambermaid, co-written and directed by Lila Avilés, is yet another attempt at capturing the plight of the lower-class Mexican workforce. However, unlike last year's Roma, this film feels much less pretentious and tedious.

Avilés's movie follows a young maid in one of the most luxurious hotels in Mexico City as she goes about her day-to-day activities. Although this may not be the most exciting premise on paper, it is much more interesting in execution. The interactions that the protagonist, Eve, has over the course of the film are quite interesting and explore some interesting ideas.

Of course, the most obvious theme in the movie is about the division between social classes in Mexico and the world as a whole and how the wealthier classes have a tendency to exploit the workers. However, unlike *Roma*, *The Chambermaid* approaches its subject matter with a level of subtlety and nuance. Although overtly political, the film chooses not to bash its message over the heads of the audience.

Part of the reason the movie works so well is that the protagonist is developed quite nicely. Over the course of the story, it is easy to sympathize with Eve as we see her interacting with various patrons and co-workers. Gabriela Cartol plays the protagonist in a way that is packed with emotion. Granted, her performance isn't quite as much of a standout as Yalitza Aparicio's in *Roma*, but it is still quite impressive.



The development of the supporting characters is nowhere near as complex as that of the protagonist, but it works quite well. Unlike *Roma*, *The Chambermaid* is not bogged down by unnecessary subplots and other flourishes that feel significantly underdeveloped. The sole purpose of the supporting characters is to bring about change in the protagonist, with sometimes powerful results.

One of the more powerful moments in the film happens between Eve and one of the guests staying at the hotel. The guest, who is an upper-class recent mother, relies on Eve to watch her child so that she can take a shower. The relationship that forms between Eve and the guest is unorthodox and fascinating, introducing a new theme about motherhood and the need to balance work and personal responsibilities.

On a technical level, there is admittedly no way that the movie would ever match the grand black-and-white cinematography of *Roma*. However, the style of *The Chambermaid*, having more elegant simplicity, works quite well given the theme that is so dominant in the film. The cinematography, for example, is very nice and does a great job of taking advantage of the

confined setting of the hotel. The production design is also good, helping immerse you in the movie.

The Chambermaid is, for all intents and purposes, a more subtle version of Roma. If you are a fan of Cuarón's film, this may seem stale and redundant to you. However, if you were left wanting something more from last year's critical darling, Avilés's take on the subject is sure to be intriguing.

The Chambermaid is now playing in theaters.

# The Chambermaid

Directed by Lila Aviles

*Slice-of-life film about a young maid at a luxury hotel coping with and rising above the messiness of her work life.*



## Film Review by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

All of us are bothered and sometimes bewildered by messes in the places of our lives. We regularly try to bring order to them, but again and again we are overwhelmed. The ways out of this pattern are yearning and imagination — we open our hearts and minds to new possibilities.



This is the experiences of the 24-year-old hotel worker in *The Chambermaid*. This fascinating film by Mexican writer and director Lila Aviles is set entirely in the upscale Hotel Presidente Intercontinental Hotel in Mexico City.



In the opening scene, Eve (Gabriela Cartol) is cleaning a room and is astonished to find the guest lying on the floor tangled up in the sheets. He gets up and leaves, and she carries on with her efforts to contain and restrain chaos in rooms cluttered with clothes and possessions. Another guest keeps pestering her for extra towels and amenities. A young mother, left alone in the hotel with her young baby, asks Eve to watch the child while she showers; this becomes an ongoing off-the-books childcare job.

Eve works very hard, performing one repetitive task after another as she goes through her shift. When another worker gets behind, she steps in to help. She checks in by phone with her young child's caregiver and spends her breaks looking out the windows to the city below or reading a book in an empty room. Her curiosity and imagination liven up the drudgery of her work. She looks through a guest's things to imagine what their lives might be like. Who knows, the wastebasket might yield a surprise.

Eve is a loner who speaks rarely. This both attracts and repels others including a critical supervisor, a fellow maid who is determined to bring more laughter into her working life (Teresa Sánchez), and a window-cleaner whose obsession with her pays off in a sexual treat beyond his wildest dreams.

*The Chambermaid* is a superbly paced and well-acted slice-of-life. Eve's dreams may seem modest. She would like to get assigned to a higher, more luxurious floor. And she'd like to take home a red dress she found in one of the rooms and turned in to her supervisor. What's clear is that routine and even disappointment will not stifle her yearning. Filmgoers will empathize with her, cheer for her, and admire her resilience.





## THE CHAMBERMAID



**Director:** Lila Avilés

**Cast:** Gabriela Cartol, Teresa Sánchez

**MPAA Rating:** **NR**

**Running Time:** 1:42

**Release Date:** 6/26/19 (limited); 7/5/19 (wider)



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**Review by Mark Dujcik | July 4, 2019**

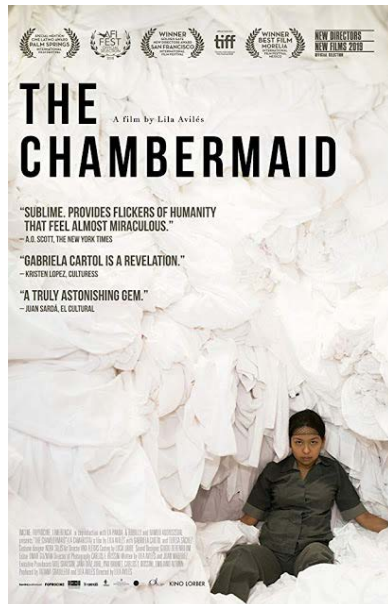
The camera never leaves the hotel in *The Chambermaid*, because, for all intents and purposes, Eve (Gabriela Cartol) never does, either. She's a maid at an upscale hotel in Mexico City. She is also 24 and a single mother, who lives a long bus ride away from the city in a home without a shower. None of that really matters when Eve is at work, except for the fact that the lack of a shower at home means more time spent at the hotel, where there are showers for the employees.

Co-writer/director Lila Avilés' debut feature presents only Eve's work life, since her work means that she really has no chance for any kind of life outside of it. She works all day and most of the night. By the time she's ready to go home, her 4-year-old son is likely asleep, and by the time the boy's awake, Eve is likely heading out or about to head out the door to return to her job. Even if the film left the tall and expansive but oppressive confines of the hotel in order to show Eve at home, we imagine there wouldn't be much to see.

Instead, Avilés and Juan Carlos Marquéz's screenplay follows the day-to-day routines and the brief moments of breaking from them. More to the point, it's about the ways in which small promises—a possible promotion, a red dress that a guest left behind, an Argentinian guest who suggests Eve should move with her own child to become the woman's full-time nanny, a class for getting her GED—are the only glimmers of hope that something might come of this working-to-live and living-to-work existence. As such, not much happens in the story, but that's of little concern. The central focus is observing how the routine has come to define Eve and how each promise—made and inevitably broken in some way—helps her to realize how trapped she is by that restricted definition of her life.

Cartol's performance is masterful in how much she communicates about the character's mounting frustrations without saying much, and over the course of *The Chambermaid*, Avilés creates a fascinating world—filled with mundane politics and tenuous relationships and betrayals—out of the behind-the-scenes operations of the hotel. We come to understand it, not solely as a job, but as an elaborate trap.

**TrustMovies**



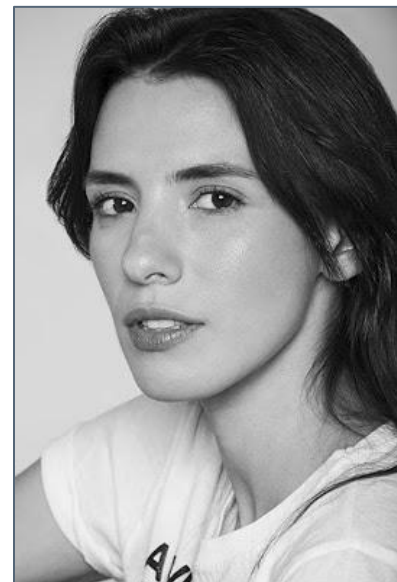
It's not simply that both films are from Mexico, nor that their leading ladies seem to have an awfully lot in common, nor that **Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*** and **Lila Avilés' *THE CHAMBERMAID*** tackle class, race, and the dominant culture so very well. It's all this and more. Specifically, both movies offer up the plight of maids/caretakers in Mexico. Though *Roma*'s works for a somewhat wealthy bourgeois family several decades in the past, while Ms Avilés' labors in a present-day, high-class hotel, not a whole lot appears to have changed for the country's indigenous underclass. Even more astonishing, *The Chambermaid* proves *Roma*'s artistic equal in many ways.

Granted, we don't have that gorgeous black-and-white cinematography to salivate over, but the excellent color work by **Carlos Rossini** brings a crisp documentary-like sheen to all we see -- from the mammoth laundry room and maintenance quarters to the exquisitely designed hotel rooms that would seem to have genuinely earned this establishment its five stars.

Even more surprising is the fact that Ms Avilés, shown at right, who both directed and co-wrote (with **Juan Carlos Marquéz**) has kept us viewers in a single location through her entire film. Yet so full of fascinating life and detail are the (very long) days our heroine must put in at her place of employment that each scene we observe holds us enthralled.

When, at last, in the film's final shot, we see the street outside, **TrustMovies** was suddenly jolted into the awareness that he'd been kept inside the hotel for the entire duration. And he had not minded at all. This is thanks in equal measure to Avilés, her crack technical staff, and especially her exceptional leading lady, the wonderful **Gabriela Cartol**, shown above and below. Ms Cartol may initially appear, as her character Evelia, rather mousy and unprepossessing, but by the finale, I suspect you will find her, as did I, beautiful, intelligent, enterprising, sexy and as full of life as you could ever want any woman to be.

Along the way, we discover many different aspects of Evelia's existence -- how she works (and what a very good worker she is), her life outside the hotel (even though we only hear and/or hear *about* this), her co-workers, and even to an extent (in a very surprising scene) her "love" life. We get a feeling for how things "work" at this hotel --





politically and otherwise -- even we meet a few of the hotel's guests. And, yes, they're just as wealthy and entitled as you might imagine. But they're also not -- some of them, at least -- total creeps.

There's a GED class on premises, too, as well as a possible promotion in store for our girl, and maybe even a lovely red dress she has found and placed "dibs" on, should it

not be claimed by the guest who left it. There's a child (the infant of a guest) for whom she is suddenly caring during her busy day, along with her own child, whom it is clear she seldom sees. And there's a funny, slightly strange co-worker (played with great verve and humor by **Teresa Sánchez**, above and below, right) who bonds with Evelia, even as she uses her.

By the finale, you'll be as firmly in the shoes and soul of Evelia as would seem possible in the space of just 102 minutes in this graceful, lean-yet-packed look at the Mexican workplace that offers up class, economics and culture without ever jamming its ideas down our throats or creating typical hiss-worthy villains. Oh, everything's there, all right, but the great strength of the movie is how Evelia can, by virtue of character, rise above it.

Well, *almost*.

From **Kino Lorber**, in Spanish with English subtitles, *The Chambermaid* has its U.S. theatrical premiere this coming Wednesday, June 26, in New York City at **Film Forum**. The following Friday, July 5, it opens in San Francisco (at the **Roxie**) and Los Angeles (at **Laemmle's Royal**) before venturing out to a few more cities. Click **here** to view all currently scheduled playdates and theaters.



## Modern Faith, Lone Maid, Comradeship & Jealousy



THE

### CHAMBERMAID

Actress turned director Lila Avilés is an emerging female voice in Mexican cinema. Winner of the New Director Award at multiple festivals such as Portland, Marrakech, San Francisco and Havana, she's certainly one filmmaker to watch. Following the routine of a hotel worker and her colleagues, Avilés paints an enigmatic and profound canvas of Mexico's social and economical struggles, represented through the protagonist Eve. Her particular universe is every piece of her work, her dedication, integrity and temptations. As she goes on with her duties, she crosses path with strangers, whom constantly approaches her for help: a flirtatious lesbian co-worker, a mother guest and her infant, and a supervisor from other floor. Avilés brilliantly captures her anxiety and hopelessness, as she delves into loneliness and melancholy, longing for her baby child; she's also determined to become promoted and move to a higher level floor, anxiously waiting for the manager's call. The political negligence is represented in the GED classes taken by Eve and her colleagues, when suddenly the system shuts it down, interrupting their dreams of a better education. Nominated for the Actress Prize at the Ariel Awards, Gabriela Cartol gives a breakthrough performance in the title role, expressing her inner, saddened emotions, as well as the hormonal turbulence, with incredibly touching techniques. Structured with the influences of Neo-realism, it's a lyrical, honest and timely portrait of a working woman's challenges and expectations. (*Kino Lorber. 6/26. Film Forum.*)

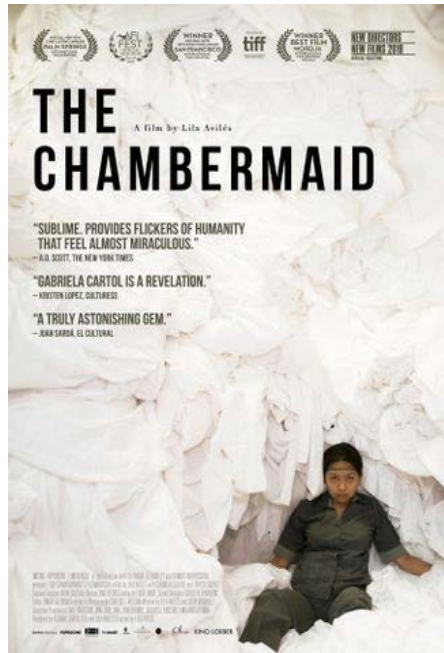
**THE NYC MOVIE GURU**



## Reviews for June 26th, 2019

### The Chambermaid

Directed by Lila Avilés

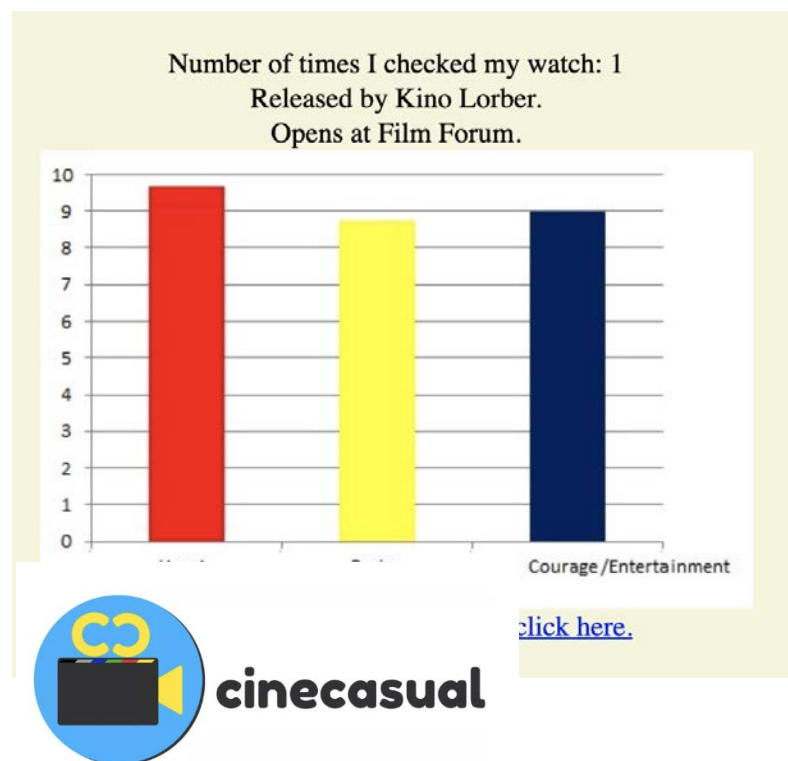


Eve (Gabriela Cartol) works as a chambermaid at an upscale hotel in Mexico City. She attends classes to get her GED which is where she meets and befriends a coworker, Minotoy (Teresa Sanchez). Every now and then, she flirts with a window cleaner while he washes a window outside of a hotel room.

As Hitchcock once observed, some movies are slices of cake while others are slices of life. The Chambermaid is very much the latter. Writer/director Lila Avilés and co-writer Juan Carlos Marquéz take the mundane and make it profound without the use of much dialogue or plot. This isn't the kind of movie with twists and turns or thrills nor does it grab your attention right away; it does so very gradually. There's a documentary-like feeling to the scenes that makes you forget that you're watching a fictional narrative. It's a meditative, slow-burning film that's filled with quiet moments that will test the average moviegoer's patience. Those who have patience will be rewarded with a tender, nuanced character study. The filmmakers provide no flashbacks, exposition or voice-over narration, so they clearly trust the audience's intelligence and imagination. Even a phone call that Eve makes to her family is brief and doesn't include a scene that introduces you to her family members. 99.99% of the film takes place entirely inside the hotel which becomes a character in itself.

In a Hollywood version of *The Chambermaid*, Eve would probably witness a murder taking place and have a romance with the window cleaner. No such events happen during the course of the film, although Avilés and Marquéz do play around with audience's preconceived notions while skirting them. For example, when Eve spots blood on a bed sheet, you'd think maybe someone was murdered, but, alas, no---it's just menstrual blood. Minotoy comes to Eve's rescue by helping her to wash out the stained bed sheet, so that scene occurred not as a means of adding suspense, but as a stepping stone to further strengthen the bond of friendship between Eve and Minotoy. *The Chambermaid* doesn't have any conventional Spectacle; just a lot of Truth. Avilés and Marquéz find the Spectacle within the Truth, though, because humanism in and of itself is a special form of Spectacle if you're willing and able to perceive it. c

If the running time were 3 hours instead of 102 minutes, *The Chambermaid* would've been too long, tedious and exhausting. Fortunately, the filmmakers have discipline and end the film just before it reaches that tipping point. It's fortunate that they found actors who give natural performances because each of them adds to the film's authenticity. Teresa Sanchez is a warm actress and has great comedic timing during the small moments of comic relief. You can't feel the wheels of the performances turning nor can you find the wheels of the screenplay turning. There's not a single dull moment to be found which is a testament to how the film makes the minutia of everyday life so engrossing. *The Chambermaid* would make for a great double feature with *The Second Mother*. Any comparisons to *Roma*, although tempting, would be futile and unfair because the infinitely transcendent *Roma* is in a league of its own with its poetic black-and-white cinematography.





CÁMARA LENTA ENTREVISTAS

## Lila Avilés: “Deseo con todo mi corazón continuar siendo cineasta”

junio 24, 2019

Deja un comentario

La ópera prima de **Lila Avilés**, ‘**La camarista**’, tuvo su estreno internacional en la 43ª edición del **Festival Internacional de Cine de Toronto (TIFF)** y posteriormente se estrenó en el 16º Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia (FICM), donde obtuvo el **Ojo a Largometraje Mexicano**.

Durante el marco del **IFF Panamá**, tuvimos la oportunidad de conversar con la actriz y directora mexicana.

### Cine Casual: ¿De dónde nace la inspiración para crear ‘La camarista’?

**Lila Avilés:** Siempre pienso en todo lo que abarca el arte. La primera semilla que detonó esto—que hoy por hoy es una película mexicana, dirigida por Lila Avilés—fue un libro de una artista visual que se llama Sophie Calle, donde ella se metió de camarista en un hotel en Venecia, y durante dos meses estuvo fotografiando los objetos de los huéspedes. En ese entonces, yo sentí mucha curiosidad. Me gustó la idea de la ausencia y de la materia; de lo que

pesa y que ya te dice algo de esa persona nada más con verlo. Entonces escribí una obra de teatro, que no tiene nada que ver con 'La camarista', pero de hecho es chistoso porque, si uno confía en la lingüística, en el poder de la lengua, ya cuando empecé a encontrar mi mundo interior para la película, me enteré que en México no se le dice camarera, se dice camarista. Me pareció una palabra muy bonita, que creo que ahora que estoy viajando, no está en otros lugares—excepto en México—y me pareció una palabra muy poderosa. Es como la maestría del oficio de la cama. Hasta en cualquier oficio hay un arte. Poco a poco se fue gestando el guión, gestando la película y ahora gestando el viaje.

**CC:** ¿Qué similitudes ves entre una camarista y una directora?

**LA:** Para mí, ha sido...es lo mismo. Uno va entendiendo más cosas, va superando obstáculos, no solo laborales, sino humanos. Vas entendiendo cosas, y yo creo que esa es la belleza de los caminos. Porque obviamente, cualquier pieza artística—al final en el caso del pintor es el cuadro, del escritor es el libro; en el caso del cineasta es la película esa cosa tangible que ya es—ya trae incluida mucha información, es un contenedor de información. Entonces para mí, es el camino más bello en el que me he involucrado.



**CC:** Háblanos un poco sobre tu protagonista, Gabriela Cartol. ¿Cómo la encontraste?

**LA:** Yo creo mucho en la química; en el *qué se yo, no se qué, pero sé*. En mi camino, lo que fue muy bonito, es que como yo no traía ya las castañuelas ni nada, pues me fue más fácil buscar una humanidad particular, una gran actriz, pero no solo una gran actriz, sino una gran mujer. Un gran ser humano que se subiera al barco conmigo y que confiara, porque el trabajo del director y el actor es un acto de confianza absoluta. Entonces cuando vi a Gabi en una película mexicana que se llama 'La tirisia', me pareció muy bonita su cara. Ella hacía un personaje más secundario, pero como que algo de ella me jaló, y ya la invitamos y hubo

química. Me gustó ella porque, cuando uno filma, no es que la película va a terminar cuando se termine el rodaje, o sea, vienen los festivales, viene la convivencia, entonces también me interesaba que en ese acompañamiento nos lleváramos increíble. Son como los viajes con los amigos: o puede ser la maravilla o puede ser el horror. Entonces en ese sentido se gestó de una forma muy amorosa; hasta la fecha somos hiper-amigas, la quiero un montón. Por suerte hemos tenido la fortuna de viajar un chorro y ella va a un festival, yo voy a otro, la otra productora va a otro, o sea, como que nos dividimos, pero a veces cuando nos juntamos, Gabi lleva a toda la familia mexicana, entonces somos ya como una tribu ahí y se vuelve todo muy bello.



**CC:** Durante la sesión de preguntas después de la proyección de la película en [IFE](#)

**Panamá,** hablaste sobre el concepto de tocar puertas: algunas que a veces abren, otras que no, y lo que pueda o no estar del otro lado. ¿Puedes elaborar un poquito más sobre eso?

**LA:** Esa es la belleza del mundo. Al final de cuentas, uno busca una especie de conexión, ¿no? A veces no es solo laboral, es en el amor, es en la comunicación, en lo que está del otro lado. Una puerta puede ser hasta una frontera. Entonces es, cómo puedes entender que puedo entrar, y quizás que no haya nada; otro ser humano, como en el caso de 'La camarista'. Porque normalmente, en su día a día es la ausencia, porque ese es el trabajo— trabajar cuando no esté la gente, con el vacío, y en su oficio trabajan con lo invisible, con los restos de eso. En el camino, uno como creador va explorando distintos universos. En mi caso, para hacer la película

me puse a estudiar un poco sobre la antropología de la basura; que puedes entender quién vive en ese espacio solo con ver su basura. Ahora, imagínate que dirían del planeta entero si estudiaran—con tanta basura que hay—, se estudiara a profundidad que está sucediendo. Entonces no sé, son caminos que me parece que son interesantes, digo, que no son tan tangibles, pero están ahí de alguna forma.

**CC: ¿Sientes que el éxito que ha tenido ‘La camarista’ le abrirá puertas a otras directoras en México?**

**LA:** Hacer una película es un milagro, ya la terminas y dices “llegué”. Luego ves que empieza a viajar, le empieza a ir bien, empiezas a conocer gente y se empiezan abrir [puertas]. Lo bonito es eso, porque hay que abrir uno y luego abrirle a otra persona, entonces en ese sentido como que se empieza a abrir una cadena bella.



**CC: Ahora que estás en la etapa del “llegué” y finalizando los viajes, ¿has pensado en futuros proyectos?**

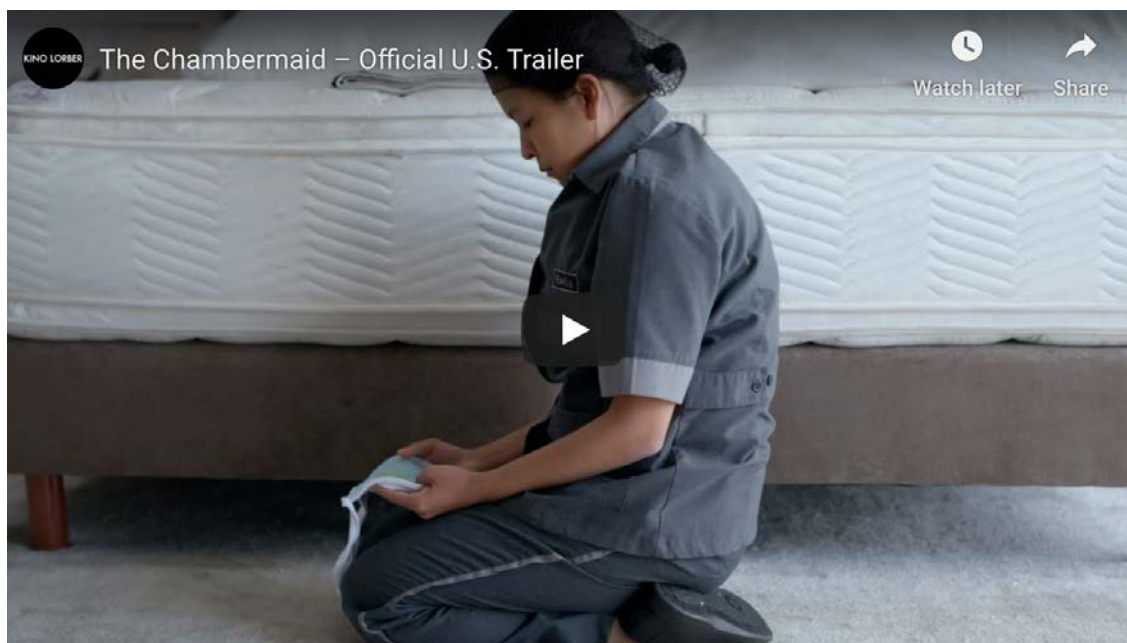
**LA:** Si, yo llevaba tanto tiempo queriendo ser cineasta que ya traigo mi anaquel de cosas que quiero hablar. Obviamente no soy una máquina, soy un ser humano creativo, pero creo mucho en el intercambio, en el día a día. Hay historias que ya tengo y que quiero sacar a flote. Tengo la fortuna que ya terminé el segundo guión. Lo tengo ahorita guardadito; ya se gestó, ya se hizo, ya lo dejé un rato. Regresaré, revisaré, y veremos que pasa, porque hay que verlo a la distancia, a la cercanía. Pero ya está, o sea, es seguir.

**CC: ¡Que bueno, vamos a tener más trabajo tuyo para seguir disfrutando!**



**LA:** Si, si...no se, chismógrafo de directores; luego te dicen “si te fue bien en la primera [película]...”, como que entre compañeros te dicen “oh la segunda, la seguuuuundaaaa”. Es como si ya hubiese un prejuicio ahí. Y digo “bueno, si la segunda no es, pues no es y vendrá la tercera”; pero mientras uno tenga un motor real de algo que uno quiera decir, yo creo que es importante. Entonces...pues...esperaré. Deseo con todo mi corazón continuar siendo cineasta y que no se me apague ese motor. Yo confié más en eso, a que la otra [película] salga más o menos; yo pienso “ojalá que tenga una vida en el cine”.

Lila recientemente fue elegida como una de los diez latinos a seguir, según una lista realizada por la revista [Variety](#).



‘La camarista’ tendrá su estreno comercial en cines de Estados Unidos el 26 de junio en Film Forum (NYC), seguido por otras ciudades. Puedes consultar las fechas de estreno por ciudad [aquí](#).





FILM

## Now in Theaters: 5 New Movies for the Weekend of June 28

WHY DO THEY KEEP TAKING ANNABELLE OUT OF HER CASE?

06/27/19

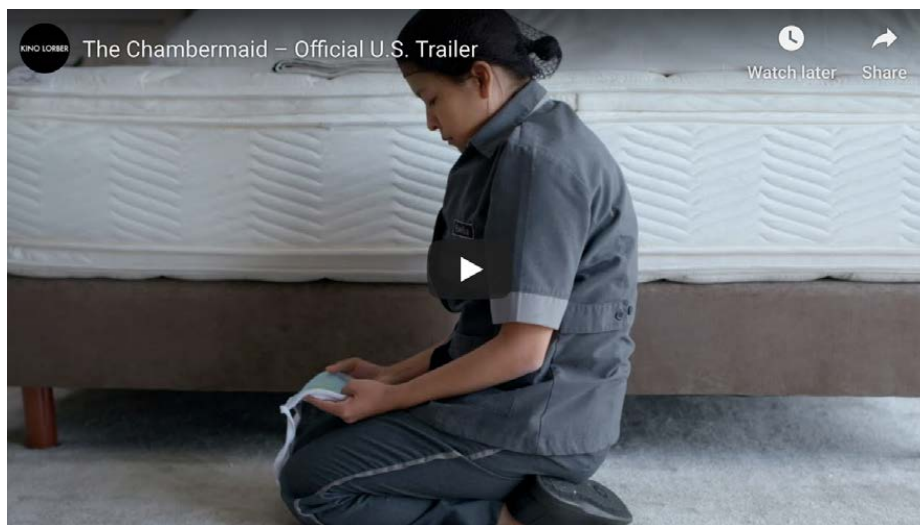


Dan K

Welcome back to "Now in Theaters: 5 New Movies for the Weekend."

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### *The Chambermaid*



Official U.S. Trailer

[www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

The Chambermaid –

*The Chambermaid* is an observational, Spanish-language drama that closely follows a young hotel maid as she works her way through an adult education program in Mexico City. The trailer is surprisingly beautiful, infusing personality into shots of mundane tasks. Initial reviews seem very positive, so if you appreciate good slice-of-life movies and can find it playing near you, I'd suggest seeking it out. *The Chambermaid* is my **PICK OF THE WEEK**.



TV

## U.S. Theatrical Release Announced for The Mexican Film THE CHAMBERMAID By Lila Aviles



Kino Lorber announces the U.S. theatrical release of *The Chambermaid* (La camarista), the auspicious and engaging film debut by Mexican director-actress-dramatist Lila Avilés, recently named one of *Variety's* "10 Latinxs to Watch 2019."

Winner of the Golden Gate Award for Best Film at the San Francisco Film Festival,

the Best Film Award at the Morelia Film Festival, the Jury Prize at the Marrakech Film Festival, and a favorite at numerous film festivals including Toronto, San Sebastian, AFI Fest and New Directors/New Films, *The Chambermaid* opens Wednesday, June 26 at Film Forum in New York City and Friday, July 5 at Laemmle Royal in Los Angeles and the Roxie Theater in San Francisco, followed by a national rollout.

The sharply observed, deeply humanistic film follows Eve - played by the wonderful Gabriela Cartol (*I Dream in Another Language*) - a young chambermaid working in one of the most luxurious hotels in Mexico City, an exclusive glass tower inhabited by wealthy guests whose lives she imagines by their belongings left behind and their absences. Long, laborious shifts prevent Eve from caring for her child as she helps guests with their own children, but she believes she can better her situation after she's promoted to work at executive-level suites, for which she accepts a grueling schedule. In keeping with her desire to improve her lot, she simultaneously enrolls in the hotel's adult education program.

An incipient friendship with her coworker and an awkward, silent flirtation with a window-washer prod her toward much needed bravery. When things don't turn out as planned, Eve transforms her solitary explorations and newfound courage into the strength to face a life outside the high-class prison that's entrapped her, breaking rules and discovering herself.

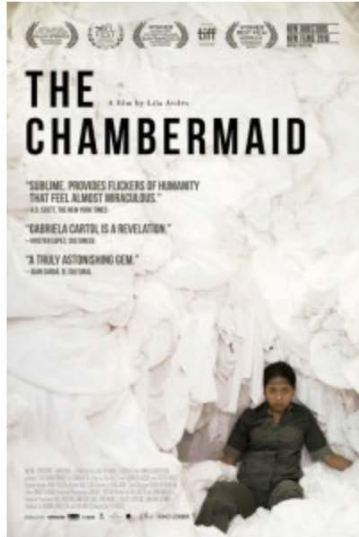
Inspired by Avilés' theater play of the same name - in turn inspired by Sophie Calle's 1980 artistic project "The Hotel," in which the French artist worked as a chambermaid in a Venice hotel - *The Chambermaid* is a standout among a thriving

new generation of Mexican and Latin American female filmmakers. With impeccable cinematography, a near-documentary eye, and a humanistic gaze, the film signals Avilés as a talent to watch.



# The Chambermaid

*The Chambermaid* Release Date: June 26, 2019



Lila Avilés' intimate debut of *The Chambermaid* (*La Camarista*) presents a strong, new voice within the wave of contemporary Mexican cinema.

Eve is a young housekeeping maid in a luxurious Mexico City hotel who struggles with the daily grind of her monotonous work. Avilés shares a humanistic portrait of Mexico's labor class in this touching story of Eve's ambitions for a better life and her journey of self-discovery along the way.

Check out photos from *The Chambermaid*:



The Chambermaid Trailer



**Starring:** Gabriela Cartol, Teresa Sánchez

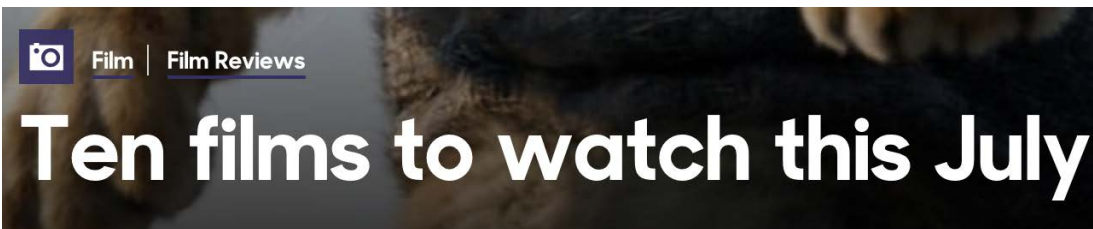
**Directed By:** Lila Avilés

**Runtime:** 102 minutes

**Studio:** Kino Lorber

**MPAA Rating**

**Unrated**



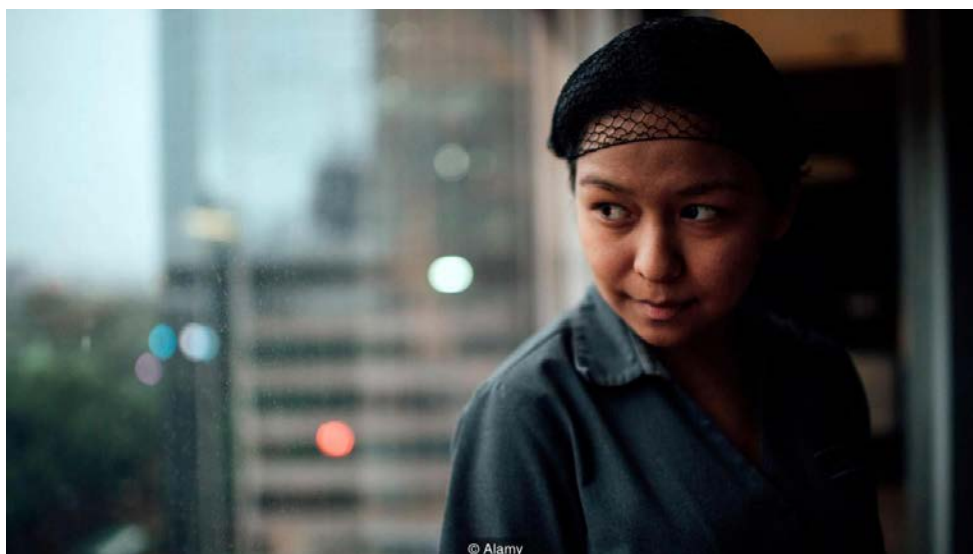
**From a seriously creepy daytime horror to the Lion King remake, Nicholas Barber chooses the films not to miss this month.**

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**By Nicholas Barber**

28 June 2019

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**The Chambermaid (La Camarista)**



When *The Chambermaid* was at film festivals last autumn, Lila Avilés's low-key debut was compared to Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*, another drama examining the quietly demanding life of a maid in Mexico City. In this instance, Eve, the maid (Gabriela Cartol) doesn't work in a family home, but in a luxury hotel. Too busy to see much of her young son, she labours for long hours every day, and dreams of nothing more than promotion to the hotel's swanky 42nd floor. Far Out magazine sees the film as a "beautifully managed character study," adding: "It's hard to imagine subject matter more mundane than we see in virtually every scene, yet somehow the story grabs our attention from the first moment, simply by making its humble central character human and relatable."

Released on 26 June in the US and 26 July in the UK

# FILM iNDEPENDENT

TAGS: DON'T-MISS INDIES / LISTS

FILM INDEPENDENT THU 6.6.2019

## Don't-Miss Indies: What to Watch in June

by SU FANG THAM



The great thing about the year 2019 is that ambitious filmmaking is no longer a virtue solely confined to awards season. Between streaming premieres, prestige projects in platform-release and even a few auteur titles sneaking their way into the multiplexes, these early-summer days are as rich as any on the movie-going calendar. Just check out June's [Don't-Miss Indies](#).

### THE CHAMBERMAID (La Camarista)



**When You Can Watch:** June 26

**Where You Can Watch:** Theaters

**Director:** Lila Avilés

**Cast:** Gabriela Cartol, Teresa Sánchez

Why We're Excited: Marking theater director Avilés' feature debut, this Spanish-language drama juxtaposes the overindulgences of the moneyed affluent against the meager existences of those who serve them. Twenty-four-year-old single mother Eve (Cartol) toils away every day at one of the most luxurious hotels in Mexico City, dreaming of the day when she works her way up to cleaning one of the executive floors. She enrolls in the hotel's adult education program hoping to make a better life for herself, but soon finds that diligence alone won't get her promoted. Reminiscent of Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma* in its unflinching look at the social stratification of Mexico City, the film has screened all over the world, including Toronto, San Sebastian and AFI Fest. Executive producer Jana Diaz Juhl is a 2011 [Project Involve](#) Fellow.

# GRANDE

## The Chambermaid Opens In New York City June 26

June 13, 2019



Eve is a young chambermaid working in one of the most luxurious hotels in Mexico City, a exclusive glass tower inhabited by guests so wealthy she can only imagine their lives through intimate fantasies of the belongings they've left behind.

Long work shifts prevent Eve from caring for her own child while she helps guests with their own children, but she believes her situation will improve if she gets promoted to work at the executive-level suites. So she accepts a grueling schedule and enrolls in the hotel's adult education program. A budding friendship with her coworker and an awkward, silent flirtation

with an inaccessible window-washer prod her toward much needed bravery. But when things don't go as planned, Eve transforms her lonely explorations and newfound courage into the necessary strength to face a life outside the glimmering tower.

Lila Avilés said The Chambermaid was born a long time ago...it began as a theater piece. The first seed that triggered this project was the book of the visual artist and photographer Sophie Calle, called Hotel. Sophie Calle started working as a chambermaid in a hotel in Venice. She

was like a spy and took photos of all objects, trash and clothing that guests were leaving in their rooms,

understanding their behavior and personality through their belongings. I liked that feeling of voyeurism, imagining the lives of others from the remains and the absence.

I didn't have a real background of Mexican chambermaids, so when I started rehearsing in Hotel Presidente I found the real soul of their work. I began to speak to them and follow them, studying

their day-to-day activities. By understanding their humanity, I was able to discover my own point of view as an artist and from that moment on, I knew that I needed to make this movie no matter what. I developed the script with Juan Marquez, my co-writer, for more than two years. Being close to chambermaids and to the hotel gave me a real picture of the high standards of quality required for their work. The process was intimate and lovely, to the extent that I decided to include some of them in the film under the same charge and with their real names. So, finally fiction and reality converged.

For me, it was very important to always have that creative freedom to film with real people and let things happen.

The hotel is the other main character. It is one of the tallest and luxurious in Mexico City. It has many contrasts – on one hand all the luxuries and comforts for the clients, some of them extremely capricious and on the other side are the chambermaids who do not even have gas or water in their homes. They travel for almost two hours to get to the hotel, working for many hours and then they travel back to their houses. It's almost a high-class prison in which Eve, the protagonist, wanders from day to day.

Eve is a hard worker and a reserved woman, one of those people who speaks little but contains a solid inner world to live hours in solitude. Eve struggles day by day to achieve a promotion and to have a better life in compliance with the norms and standards of the hotel. However, it is known that you don't always need to be the hardest worker to have the best position.

During the movie, Eve breaks rules in search for her own identity, rediscovering the world through curiosity and resilience.

While I was filming, I couldn't stop thinking about the working class, the great labor force.

Mexico is not only about violence and drug trafficking. There are also a lot of people who work non-stop to have a better way of life for themselves and their families.

The Chambermaid opens June 26 at The Film Forum in New York City until July 9.



# MOVIE TRAILERS

## Gabriela Cartol in US Trailer for Lila Avilés' Film 'The Chambermaid'

by Alex Billington  
May 29, 2019



"Eve, do you copy?" Kino Lorber has debuted an official trailer for the indie drama *The Chambermaid*, the feature directorial debut of Mexican filmmaker Lila Avilés who comes from the theater world. Not to be confused with Park Chan-wook's *The Handmaiden* or that Vietnamese ghost film *The Housemaid*, this film is set in Mexico City and is about a chambermaid working at one of the city's most luxurious hotels. "As with Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*, set in the same city, *The Chambermaid* salutes the invisible women caretakers who are the hard-working backbone of society." Gabriela Cartol stars as Eve, and the small cast includes Teresa Sánchez. This premiered at the Toronto Film Festival last year, so this trailer features a few quotes from critics who praised it. Looks like an intimate, honest drama about the forgotten workers of the world.

Here's the official US trailer (+ poster) for Lila Avilés' *The Chambermaid*, direct from KL's YouTube:



In her feature debut, theater director Lila Avilés turns the monotonous work day of Eve (Gabriela Cartol), a chambermaid at a high-end Mexico City hotel, into a beautifully observed film of rich detail. Set entirely in this alienating environment, with scenes taking place in the guest rooms, hallways, and the cleaning facilities, this minimalist yet sumptuous movie brings to the fore Eve's hopes, dreams, and desires. *The Chambermaid* is directed by Mexican theater director turned filmmaker Lila Avilés, making her feature directorial debut after a few short films + a doc previously. The screenplay is written by Lila Avilés and Juan Carlos Marquéz. This premiered at the Toronto Film Festival last year, and also played at the San Sebastián, London, San Francisco, New Directors/New Films Festivals. Kino Lorber releases Avilés' *The Chambermaid* in select US theaters starting June 26th this summer. For more info, visit the [official website](#). Interested?



## Yet Another Documentary, 'Marianne & Leonard: Words of Love,' Tops Arthouse Openers

Too many strong specialty titles like "Midsommar" are opening wide instead of rolling out slowly in theaters.



Tom Brueggemann  
Jul 7, 2019 12:34 pm



...

### **The Chambermaid (Kino Lorber)**

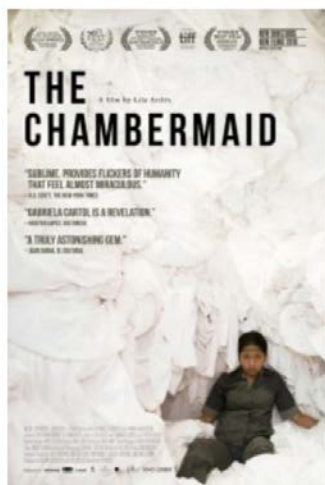
\$15,944 in 4 theaters (+3); PTA: \$3,986

Strong reviews continue for this debut film as it added two California cities to the initial dates for this story of a Mexico City high-end hotel worker. These are positive results for a subtitled release in the current market.

**WILD  
ABOUT  
MOVIES**

# The Chambermaid

*The Chambermaid* Release Date: June 26, 2019



Lila Avilés' intimate debut of *The Chambermaid* (*La Camarista*) presents a strong, new voice within the wave of contemporary Mexican cinema.

Eve is a young housekeeping maid in a luxurious Mexico City hotel who struggles with the daily grind of her monotonous work. Avilés shares a humanistic portrait of Mexico's labor class in this touching story of Eve's ambitions for a better life and her journey of self-discovery along the way.

Check out photos from *The Chambermaid*:



## The Chambermaid Trailer

The Chambermaid Trailer



**Starring:** Gabriela Cartol, Teresa Sánchez

**Directed By:** Lila Avilés

**Runtime:** 102 minutes

**Studio:** Kino Lorber

**MPAA Rating**

**Unrated**



## The 20 Best Movies of 2019 So Far



1 of 24 photo by Carlos F. Rossini

### 81 #19 (tie): **The Chambermaid**

The first feature from theater director turned filmmaker Lila Avilés takes a focused look at the daily life of a maid (played by Gabriela Cartol) at a luxury Mexico City hotel, with the entire film taking place inside the hotel.

“The film’s style is austere — there are few camera movements and no musical score — but its visual wit and emotional sensitivity lift it above the minimalist miserablism that drags down so many well-meaning films about modern workers. After you’ve seen it, the world looks different.”  
—A.O. Scott, *The New York Times*

## 호텔 청소원을 통해 본 고독과 부조리

[LA중앙일보] 발행 2019/07/06 미주판 16면 기사입력 2019/07/05 19:06



더 চে임버메이드 (The Chambermaid)

감독: 릴라 아빌레즈

주연: 가브리엘라 카톨, 테레사 산체스

장르: 아트 하우스, 드라마

등급: NR

상영시간: 106분

지난해 주요 영화제를 휩쓸다시피 한 멕시코 출신 알폰소 쿠아론 감독의 자전적 영화 '로마'가 계기가 되어 멕시코 웰메이드 영화들도 함께 주목을 받기 시작했다. 그 중, 릴라 아빌레즈의 데뷔 작품으로 저예산 독립영화에 가까운 '체임버메이드(La Camarista)'는 여러 가지 면에서 쿠아론의 '로마'와 비교된다.

두 영화는 우선 상류층과 하류층 삶의 대조적 구조 안에서 한 여성의 시각을 통해 삶의 본질적 부분을 다루었다는 점에서 유사하다.

멕시코 시티 호화로운 호텔의 청소부 이브는 지극히 평범한 소시민적 삶을 살아가는 24세의 여성이다. 배당된 층의 방들을 돌며 침대 시트를 갈고 화장실 청소를 하는 단순한 일들이 매일 반복된다. 그러나 이브는 투숙객들의 부유하고 화려한 삶을 간접 체험하며 자기만의 시공간 안에서 하루 하루를 열심히 살아간다.

그녀는 호텔방에 놓여 있는 손님들의 물건을 호기심과 흥미로 관찰한다. 가난한 하류층 시민이 경험할 수 없는 부의 일부를 그녀만의 방식으로 채취한다. 쓰레기통에 담겨 있는 물건들을 바닥에 깔아 놓고 필요한 물건들을 골라 주머니에 집어넣는 이브의 모습에 카메라가 한동안 머물러 있다.

이브는 틈틈이 집에 두고 온 4살 난 아들과 통화를 한다. 조금 교육을 마치지 못한 그녀는 고졸과정(GED)을 수료한 후 더 좋은 조건의 일자리를 구해 아들과 보낼 수 있는 시간이 많아졌으면 하는 희망으로 호텔에서 제공하는 교육 프로그램도 수강하고 있다.

이브는 자신의 배당 층을 42층으로 옮겨 달라고 매니저에게 신청을 해놓았다. 42층은 VIP 전용 초호화 객실 층이다. 얼마 전 손님이 방에 놓고 간 레드드레스를 분실물 센터에 신고했는데 일정 기간 주인이 나타나지 않으면 신고자에게 우선권을 주는 방침에 따라 며칠 후면 멋진 드레스를 가질 수 있을 거란 희망에 차 있다.

아르헨티나에서 온 투숙객 여인은 자기의 갓난 아기가 이브를 잘 따르는 것을 보고 호텔 일을 그만두고 자기와 함께 아르헨티나로 가자고 제안한다. 그녀의 호의에 이브는 은근히 아르헨티나에서의 새로운 삶을 기대하고 있다.

이브의 이러한 작은 바람들은 하나도 이루어지지 않는다. 이브는 42층이 다른 사람에게 배당됐고 레드드레스 또한 그날 생일을 맞은 다른 종업원에게 넘어갔으며 기대하던 아르헨티나 투숙객도 메모 한 장 남기지 않고 체크아웃한 사실을 차차 알게 된다.

그러나 이브는 반응에 인색하다. 늘 홀로 있는 그녀는 말이 없다. 주변인들에게 관심의 대상이 되지 못하는 자신의 존재감 없음을 한번 더 확인할 뿐이다. 영화는 호텔 밖을 벗어나지 않고 커다란 사건 없이, 호텔방과 복도를 주공간으로 움직이는 이브의 일상을 쫓으며 그녀의 심리 관찰에 한걸음 더 들어간다.

바쁘게 움직이는 대도시의 어느 한 공간, 이브의 고독과 마음속에 쌓여온 분노와 비애가 영화의 종결부를 채운다. 체임버메이드는 삶에 관해 진지하게 생각해 보는 영화다. 가슴을 무겁게 건드리는 뭉클함이 있다.

"어떤 영화는 케이크 한 조각에 불과하지만 어떤 영화는 인생의 한 조각"이라고 했던 알프레드 히치콕의 말이 떠오른다. 주변으로부터 철저히 차단됨으로써 오는 소외감, 고독과 외로움의 주인공은 어쩌면 나 자신일지도 모른다는 동질감이 마음속에 차 오른다.



이브 역의 가브리엘라 카톨은 '로마'에서 클레옌을 연기했던 알리차 아파리치오에 비해 연기의 폭이 훨씬 넓은 배우다. 대사가 그리 많지 않은 영화, 그러나 무언의 표현에서 전달되는 허탈과 무상, 부조리, 불공정의 메시지들이 그녀의 연기에 담겨있다.

## IMPACTO LATINO

### Kino Lorber anuncia el estreno en cines de Estados Unidos de la película mexicana La camarista

Por Impacto Latino - junio 5, 2019

Entretención Cine Gente



La cautivadora y humanista ópera prima de Lila Avilés se estrena el 26 de junio en Film Fórum de Nueva York y el 5 de julio en Laemmle Royal en Los Ángeles y Roxie Theater en San Francisco, seguido de otros cines del país.

**Kino Lorber se enorgullece de anunciar el estreno en cines en Estados Unidos de La camarista, la auspiciosa ópera prima de la directora, actriz y dramaturga mexicana Lila Avilés, recientemente nombrada por la revista Variety como una de los 10 talentos latinos del 2019.**

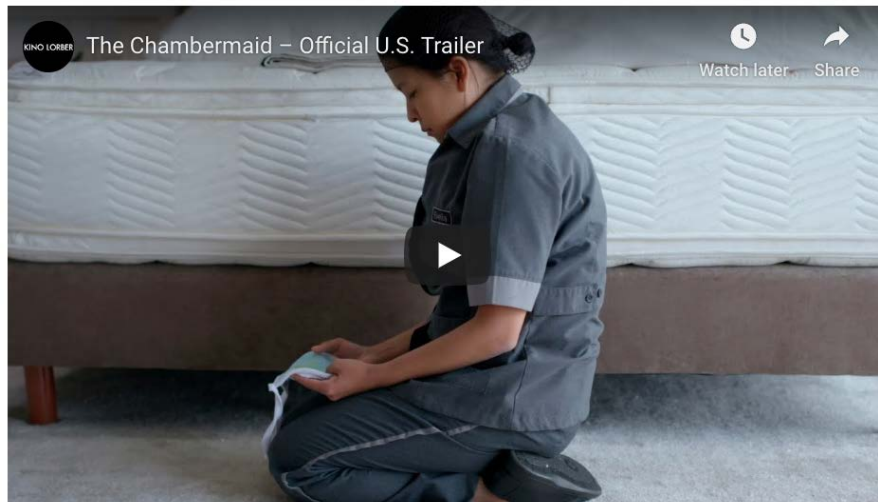
Ganadora del 'Premio Golden Gate' como mejor película en el Festival de Cine de San Francisco, el premio como mejor película en el Festival de Cine de Morelia, el Premio del Jurado en el Festival de Cine de Marrakech y seleccionada por numerosos festivales internacionales de cine como Toronto, San Sebastián, AFI Fest y New Directors / New Films, La camarista se

estrena el próximo miércoles 26 de junio en el Film Forum en la ciudad de Nueva York y el viernes 5 de julio en el Laemmle Royal de Los Ángeles y el Roxie Theater en San Francisco, seguido por otras ciudades del país.

Un delicado y cautivador retrato de clase social, la ópera prima de Avilés sigue la vida de Eve—papel interpretado por la maravillosa Gabriela Cartol (Sueño en otro idioma)—una joven camarista que trabaja en el hotel más lujoso de la Ciudad de México; una torre de vidrio



exclusivamente habitada por ricos huéspedes cuyas vidas imagina a través de los objetos olvidados y a través de su ausencia.



**Tandas largas y laboriosas ayudando a los huéspedes previenen que Eve le ponga atención a su propia hija, pero cree poder mejorar su situación cuando recibe una promoción para trabajar en las suites ejecutivas, con la condición de llevar un horario aún más agotador. Determinada a poder salir adelante, Eve también se inscribe en un programa de educación para adultos ofrecido por el hotel.**

Una nueva amistad con su compañera de trabajo y un coqueteo incómodo y silencioso con un limpiador de ventanas inspiran la valentía que tanto necesita en su vida. Cuando las cosas no resultan como se esperaban, Eve transforma sus exploraciones solitarias y su nuevo coraje es la fuerza necesaria para enfrentar una vida fuera de la prisión de clase-alta en la cual ha estado atrapada, rompiendo reglas y descubriéndose a sí misma en el proceso.

Basada en la obra de teatro homónima escrita y dirigida por Avilés, la cual se inspiró en *El Hotel* (1980) de Sophie Calle—un proyecto artístico en el cual una artista francesa trabajó en un hotel en Venecia—La camarista se destaca entre una próspera generación de cineastas mexicanas y latinoamericanas. Acompañada por una fotografía impecable, un ojo casi documental y una mirada humanista, la película posiciona a Avilés como una prometedora cineasta al cual seguirle la pista.

**Funciones de prensa en Nueva York: Jueves 13 de junio a las 10:30am y miércoles 19 de junio a las 10:30am en Film Forum (209 West Houston St.). RSVP en [press@cinematropical.com](mailto:press@cinematropical.com).**



## Mexican Film 'The Chambermaid' in U.S. Theaters

Lila Avilés' debut feature highlights women workers of the hospitality industry.

By **LatinoLA Contributor**

Published on LatinoLA: July 9, 2019



After winning multiple awards and participating at various international film festivals, "The Chambermaid"/"La Camarista" has come to Southern California.

The film follows Eve, a young chambermaid working in one of the most luxurious hotels in Mexico City, an exclusive glass tower inhabited by wealthy guests whose lives she imagines by their belongings left behind and their absences. The film opened July 5 at the Laemmle Royal in Santa Monica, where it will run through July 18. It is also playing at the Laemmle's Playhouse 7 in Pasadena through July 11.

### **A HARDWORKER WITH DREAMS**

Long, laborious shifts prevent Eve, played by Gabriela Cartol, from caring for her child as she helps guests with their own children, but she believes she can better her situation after she's promoted to work at executive-level suites, for which she accepts a grueling schedule. In keeping with her desire to improve her lot, she simultaneously enrolls in the hotel's adult education program.

An incipient friendship with her coworker and an awkward, silent flirtation with a window-washer prod her toward much needed bravery. When things don't turn out as planned, Eve transforms her solitary explorations and newfound courage into the strength to face a life outside the high-class prison that's entrapped her, breaking rules and discovering herself.

### **ACTRESS TURNS DIRECTOR**

The film marked the directorial debut by actress-dramatist Lila Avilés, recently named one of Variety's "10 Latinxs to Watch 2019."

"The Chambermaid" won the Golden Gate Award for Best Film at the San Francisco Film Festival, the Best Film Award at the Morelia Film Festival, and the Jury Prize at the Marrakech Film Festival. The drama has also played at other fests, including Toronto, San Sebastian, AFI Fest and New Directors/New Films.

The film is also playing at other selected theatres in NY and San Francisco and is expected to have a national roll-out.

### **A FRENCH CONNECTION**

The inspiration for the drama was Avilés' own theater play of the same name, which in turn was inspired by Sophie Calle's 1980 artistic project "The Hotel" in which the French artist worked as a chambermaid in a Venice hotel.

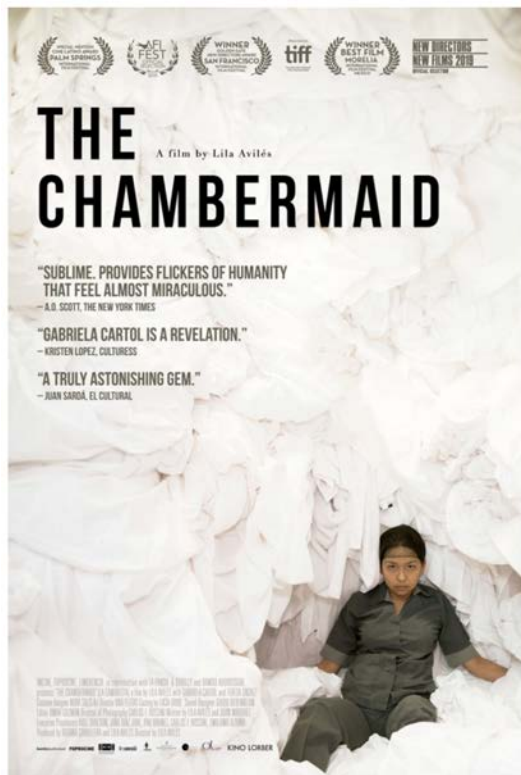


## THE INDIE FRESH LIST: AN EPIC SEA ADVENTURE AND LANDMARK LGBTQ DOCS HIT THEATERS THIS WEEK

CHECK OUT THE LATEST FRESH INDIE RELEASES, WHAT'S STILL IN THEATERS, AND WHAT'S COMING SOON.

by [Jacqueline Coley](#) | June 27, 2019 | [0 Comments](#)

### OPENING THIS WEEKEND



**THE CHAMBERMAID (LA CAMARISTA) (2019)**  
100%

Actress turned director Lila Aviles makes an impressive debut with *The Chambermaid*. Title character Eve works as a maid in a luxurious Mexico City hotel where her days are filled with monotonous menial tasks performed over long hours. To end her boredom, she breaks the time with quiet examinations of the items left in rooms and new friendships that fuel her determination for a better life. Framing star Gabriela Cartol in stationary wide shots, director Aviles has an almost voyeuristic focus on the daily tasks of a housekeeper; as we watch and learn what motivates Eve outside of her job, we start to ache with her at the hardship and frustrations of her toils. Oliver Jones of *The Observer* said of the lead, “Eve is one of the most fully and forcefully crafted characters I have seen on screen in some time.”

Playing in New York and Los Angeles on June 28, expands to limited screens on July 5.

## *La camarista*, de Lila Avilés, se presentará en Film Forum en Nueva York

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La ópera prima de **Lila Avilés**, ***La camarista*** (2018), se estrenará este miércoles en Film Forum en Nueva York. Film Forum comenzó en 1970 como un espacio de proyección alternativo para películas independientes.



*La camarista* (2018, dir. Lila Avilés)

Elogiada como “sublime” por *The New York Times*, la película retrata la historia de Eve, una solitaria camarista que en su deseo de ser alguien más descubre diferentes universos detrás de cada objeto abandonado por los huéspedes en las habitaciones que asea en el hotel donde trabaja. Eve sueña a través de ellos y transforma su soledad en compañía.

*La camarista* (2018), de **Lila Avilés**, fue la cinta ganadora del **Ojo a Largometraje Mexicano** en la 16ª edición del **Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia (FICM)**, la cual recibió el premio otorgado en colaboración con **Nespresso**.



“Desde el principio me interesaba mucho un acercamiento voyerista, me interesaba que fuéramos capaces de observar en las cosas más cotidianas y banales cierta belleza o cierta humanidad, tenía muy claro que quería secuencias de una toma y mucho perfil”, expresó Lila durante la presentación de su película en la más reciente edición del FICM.



# VIMOOZ

## Lila Avilés Award-Winning Mexican Drama **THE CHAMBERMAID** Sets June Release Date

June 5, 2019



*The Chambermaid*, directed by Lila Avilés

Kino Lorber will release *The Chambermaid* (*La camarista*), the auspicious and engaging film debut by Mexican director-actress-dramatist Lila Avilés, recently named one of Variety's "10 Latinxs to Watch 2019."

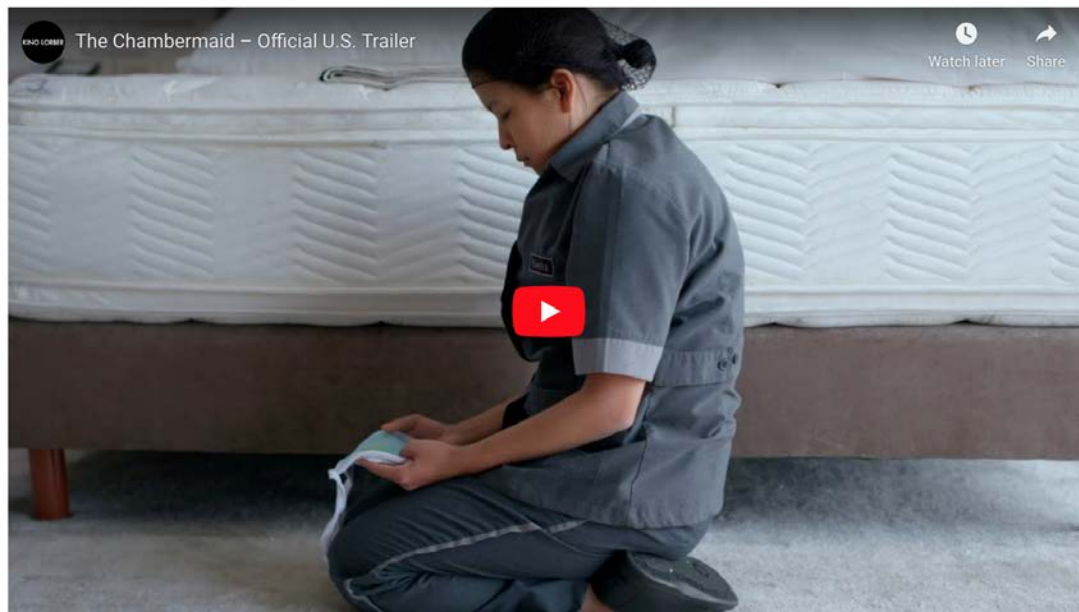
Winner of the Golden Gate Award for Best Film at the San Francisco Film Festival, the Best Film Award at the Morelia Film Festival, the Jury Prize at the Marrakech Film Festival, and a favorite at numerous film festivals including Toronto, San Sebastian, AFI Fest and New Directors/New Films, *The Chambermaid* opens Wednesday, June 26 at Film Forum in New York City, and Friday, July 5 at Laemmle Royal in Los Angeles and the Roxie Theater in San Francisco, followed by a national rollout.



A poignant and delicate class portrait, Avilés' film follows Eve – played by the wonderful Gabriela Cartol (*I Dream in Another Language*) – a young chambermaid working in one of the most luxurious hotels in Mexico City, an exclusive glass tower inhabited by wealthy guests whose lives she imagines by their belongings left behind and their absences. Long, laborious shifts prevent Eve from caring for her child as she helps guests with their own children, but she believes she can better her situation after she's promoted to work at executive-level suites, for which she accepts a grueling schedule. In keeping with her desire to improve her lot, she simultaneously enrolls in the hotel's adult education program.

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Inspired by Avilés' theater play of the same name – in turn inspired by Sophie Calle's 1980 artistic project "The Hotel," in which the French artist worked as a chambermaid in a Venice hotel – *The Chambermaid* is a standout among a thriving new generation of Mexican and Latin American female filmmakers. With impeccable cinematography, a near-documentary eye, and a humanistic gaze, the film signals Avilés as a talent to watch.



The Chambermaid (La camarista) Trailer



## 5 foreign films not to miss this summer

Ruthe Stein | May 20, 2019 | Updated: May 24, 2019, 1:28 pm



It's a slow summer for foreign films, with just five besides "The Fall of the American Empire" receiving major American release. But even just a small number offer a respite from the noisy special effects extravaganzas on the big screen.

**"The Chambermaid"** This film follows a humble woman working in a hotel, which director Lila Aviles describes as a "high-class prison." The title character is meant to represent the constrained lives of many people working in Latin America. The film is based on Aviles' play "La Camarera." Mexican; opening June 28



BY Gabriela Rico

June 3, 2019

The summer movie season is kicking off with dozens of films helmed by and centered on women. From Sundance pics to mega blockbusters, June promises to be a month chock-full of exciting releases.

The highly anticipated, Mindy Kaling-penned “Late Night” (June 7) features Emma Thompson as the only female late-night talk show host — who it turns out does not have a single woman on her writing staff. Kaling’s character is in the right place at the right time and gets her dream job. The same week, “Game of Thrones” star Sophie Turner will reprise her role as Jean Grey in “Dark Phoenix” (June 7), the latest installment in the “X-Men” franchise.

Women in animation will have plenty to celebrate, with a handful of women-written releases this month. “Funan” (June 7), penned by Magali Pouzol and Denis Do, travels back in time to the Cambodian Genocide to follow a woman separated from her four-year-old son as she attempts to navigate life under the Khmer Rouge regime. And of course, “Toy Story 4” (June 21) will hit theaters across the country this month. In the franchise’s newest chapter, writers Stephany Folsom and Andrew Stanton take Woody and the gang on a road trip, where they meet new friends and discover how big the world truly is.

June will also feature a number of politically-charged documentary releases. Shannon Service and Jeffrey Waldron’s “Ghost Fleet” (June 7) observes the activists fighting for justice and freedom for enslaved fishermen in Indonesia. “Life Overtakes Me” (June 14), directed by Kristine Samuelson and John Haptas, takes a look into a devastating syndrome affecting refugee children at risk of being deported from Sweden. Lastly, “This Changes Everything” (June 28) will feature interviews with influential Hollywood figures such as Meryl Streep and Shonda Rhimes as it takes a look at sexism in Hollywood, the #MeToo movement, and the feminist filmmaker movements of the past.

Finally, in honor of Pride Month, two pivotal women-directed documentaries will be re-released in theaters. Jennie Livingston’s iconic “Paris Is Burning” (June 14) gives an inside look into New York City’s drag scene from 1985-1989. Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg’s “Before Stonewall” (June 21) explores the gay and lesbian community’s history before the events that

solidified its movement for equality. And with “Elisa & Marcela” (June 7), Netflix will also pay homage to pride, as Isabel Coixet’s film centers on a lesbian couple in 1885 who make a daring plan in order to remain together.

Here are all of the women-centric, women-directed, and women-written films premiering this June. All descriptions are from press materials unless otherwise noted.

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## June 26

“The Chambermaid” – Directed by Lila Avilés; Written by Lila Avilés and Juan Carlos Márquez



"The Chambermaid"

Eve (Gabriela Cartol), a young chambermaid at a luxurious Mexico City hotel, confronts the monotony of long workdays with quiet examinations of forgotten belongings and budding friendships that nourish her newfound and determined dream for a better life.



FEATURES

## Weekly Update for June 21: Women Centric, Directed, and Written Films Playing Near You

BY Rachel Montpelier

June 21, 2019

### FILMS ABOUT WOMEN OPENING

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**The Chambermaid – Directed by Lila Avilés; Written by Lila Avilés and Juan Carlos Marquéz (Opens June 26 in NY)**

Eve (Gabriela Cartol), a young chambermaid at a luxurious Mexico City hotel, confronts the monotony of long workdays with quiet examinations of forgotten belongings and budding friendships that nourish her newfound and determined dream for a better life.





Set



in a

luxurious hotel in  
Avilés' "The  
absorbing portrait of

## THIS WEEK'S PICKS

Mexico City, Lila  
Chambermaid" is an  
Eve (Gabriela Cartol),

**The Chambermaid - Directed by Lila Avilés; Written by Lila Avilés and Juan Carlos Marquéz**



a hardworking maid determined to change her circumstances. The young single mother enrolls in the hotel's adult education program, seeks a promotion as a cleaner on the hotel's executive floor, and is famously professional among her co-workers, refusing to be distracted from her responsibilities at work. But "The Chambermaid" is not a feel-good, tone-deaf story about how dedication pays off -- Eve's efforts are rarely rewarded. The hotel guests treat her as if she's invisible, or like her existence is an inconvenience. She rarely gets to see her son. She showers at work because she doesn't have hot water at home.

Rarely do we get the opportunity to see a story centered around a woman like Eve. “The Chambermaid” is a refreshing tribute to a character who is usually relegated to the sidelines -- if she’s depicted at all.

Avilés spent years following maids in their daily lives, and those experiences and the insights she gleaned from them show. “The Chambermaid” feels like a documentary at times, the monotony of Eve’s days playing out as if they are happening in real time.

“The Chambermaid’s” successful festival run kicked off at the 2018 Toronto International Film Festival. The drama has picked up honors at Marrakech International Film Festival, San Francisco International Film Festival, and Portland International Film Festival, among others. (Laura Berger)

Read Women and Hollywood’s interview with Lila Avilés.

***"The Chambermaid" opens in NY June 26. It will roll out to additional cities in the coming weeks. Find screening info here.***



2019-04-25 14:11:18- Nuestratele Internacional

## Hablamos con la cineasta mexicana Lila Avilés sobre el éxito de 'La Camarista'



**La actriz y directora de cine mexicana Lila Avilés visitó nuestros estudios en Nueva York para hablarnos sobre el éxito del filme 'La Camarista'.**

Es tal el éxito de esta producción cinematográfica, que Lilia obtuvo nueve nominaciones y seis galardones, entre ellas el premio del público a mejor nueva directora en el Festival de Cine de Portland.

La cinta tiene como personaje central a 'Eve', una mujer aislada que está en búsqueda de su identidad. En el elenco participan: Gabriela Cartol en el rol protagónico y Teresa Sánchez como 'Minitoy'.

Nuestra Tele Internacional



## Lila Avilés' Acclaimed Debut Feature **THE CHAMBERMAID** Is Coming Soon to U.S. Theaters

June 4, 2019



New York-based distribution company Kino Lorber has announced the U.S. theatrical release of *The Chambermaid / La camarista*, the auspicious and engaging film debut by Mexican director-actress-dramatist Lila Avilés, recently named one of *Variety's* "10 Latinxs to Watch 2019."

Winner of the Golden Gate Award for Best Film at the San Francisco Film Festival, the Best Film Award at the Morelia Film Festival, the Jury Prize at the Marrakech Film Festival, and a favorite at numerous film festivals including Toronto, San Sebastian, AFI Fest and New Directors/New Films, *The Chambermaid* opens Wednesday, June 26 at Film Forum in New York City and Friday, July 5 at Laemmle Royal in Los Angeles and the Roxie Theater in San Francisco, followed by a national rollout.

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