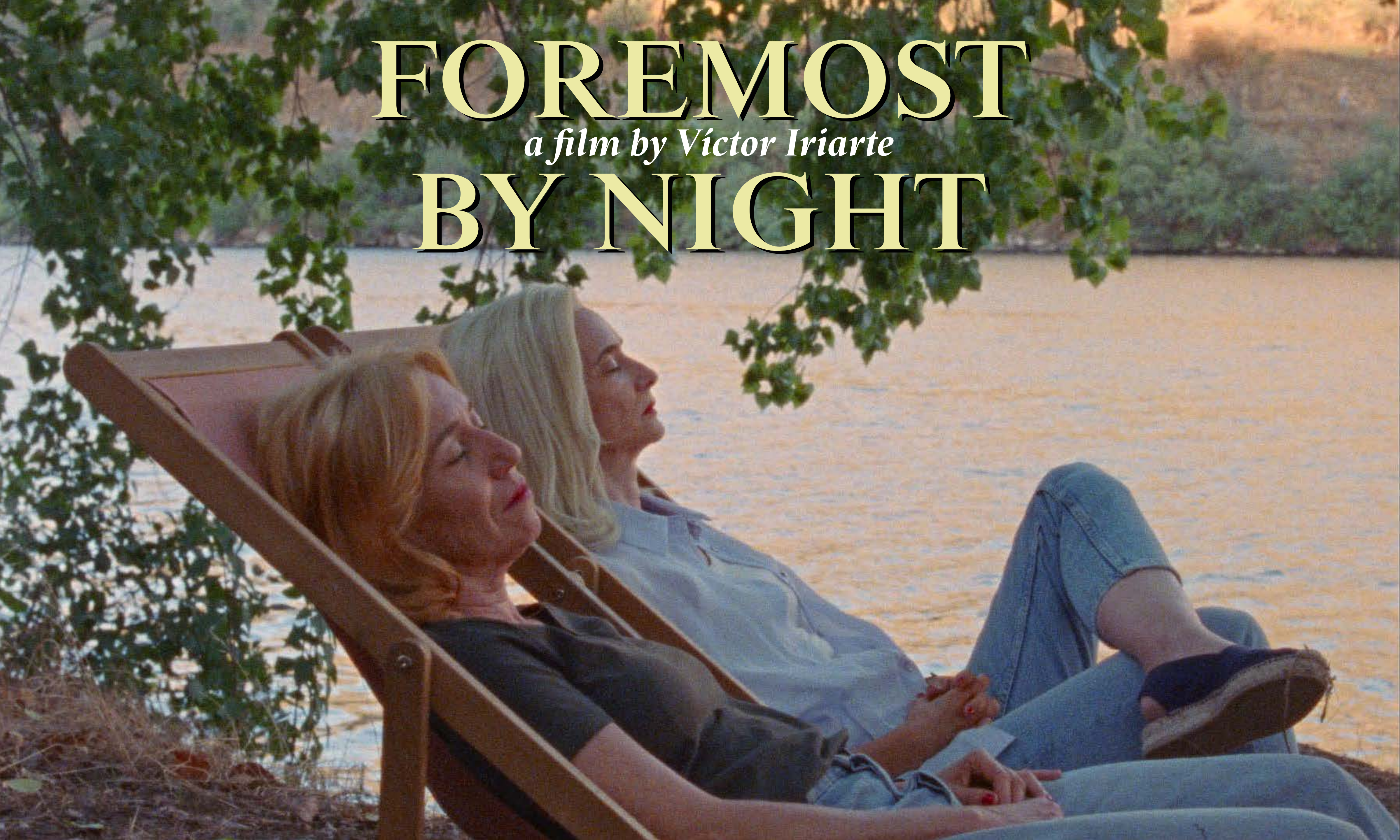


FOREMOST

a film by Víctor Iriarte

BY NIGHT



This is going to be a horror story.
A crime story, a noir story, an horror tale. But it
won't appear to be, for the simple reason that I
am the teller. Told by me, it won't seem like that.
Although, in fact, it's the story of a terrible crime.

Amuleto, Roberto Bolaño.



LOGLINE & SYNOPSIS

A film noir encompassing three deaths, two robberies, and a runaway. The story of two women meeting on the banks of the Douro River.

When VERA (Lola Dueñas) was young, she wasn't able to take care of her son and had to give him up for adoption. Years later, when she tried to find him, the institutions told her that her file did not exist. She has continued to look for him ever since.

When CORA (Ana Torrent) was young, her doctor told her that she could not have children and that only by adopting could she start a family. CORA has dedicated her life to teaching piano lessons and caring for her adopted son, EGOZ, about to turn 18.

Now, the paths of these three characters - a mother, a son, a mother - are about to cross. And their encounter will change their lives forever.





FOREMOST BY NIGHT SOBRE TODO DE NOCHE

110 minutes / DCP 2K / 1.66 :1 / Color /
VO Spanish / Spain – Portugal – France / 2023

DIRECTOR: Víctor Iriarte

SCRIPT: Isa Campo, Andrea Queralt, Víctor Iriarte

CINEMATOGRAPHER, Pablo Paloma

ART DIRECTION: Izaskun Urkijo

DIRECT SOUND: Alazne Amezttoy

EDITING: Ana Pfaff

SOUND MIX: Iosu Gonzalez Etxabe

MUSIC: Maite Arroitauregi

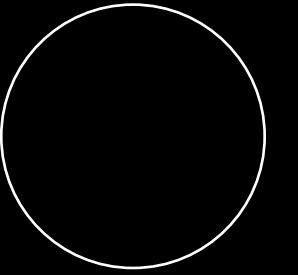
SPANISH PRODUCTION: La Termita Films, Inicia Films, Atekaleun, CSC
Films

IN COPRODUCTION WITH: Ukbar Filmes (Portugal), 4A4 Productions
(France)

WITH THE SUPPORT OF: ICAA (Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las
Artes Audiovisuales, Gobierno de España), Gobierno Vasco, Diputación de
Guipúzcoa, RTVE Radio Televisión Española, TV3 Televisión de Cataluña,
EITB, Eurimages, Aide aux cinémas du monde



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



It is a film of violence.

It is a film about hands / It's a film about maps.
It's a road movie. A film about feelings. Feelings on the road.
It's an adventure film. A sad adventure film.
Sad, but also bright.

It is a political film. Deeply political. Intimately political.

It's a musical. It's choreographic.

It is a film about letters. Handwritten letters.
Letters that are read aloud, letters that are sent as audio messages.

It's a thriller. It is a film noir, it is a detective story.
It's a melodrama.

It is a film
that becomes another film,
that becomes another film,
that becomes another film.

It is a film about a mother, about a mother, about her son.

It is a film about the possibility of being another.
About the possibility of changing fate.
About the possibility of being in two places at once:
Here. And there.

It is a film about a wound. About a wound. About a wound.

It's a ghost film.

It is a film about how stories, how narration, builds another possible world. About how stories, how narrations, can transform us. About how, when you have nothing, when everything has been taken from you, the stories, narrations, fictions, films, letters, voices, memories, are the only thing that can save us.

That can give us some peace / That can give us a place in the world.

It's a love song.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Víctor Iriarte (Bilbao, 1976) is an artist, filmmaker and film programmer. He is member of the selection committee of the San Sebastian International Film Festival since 2015. He has been for 9 years director of film programming at the Tabakalera International Center for Contemporary Culture in San Sebastian and founding member of the Elías Querejeta Zine Eskola film school.

Assistant director on Isaki Lacuesta's first feature film, *Cravan versus Cravan* (2001). Cinematographer on the feature film *Buenas noches, España* by Filipino director Raya Martin, presented at the Locarno Film Festival 2011.

He created his own production company Cajaconcosasdentro in 2005 and since then has completed a cinematic and audiovisual work that has been presented in the international circuit of festivals and contemporary art centers: FID Marseille (France), Torino Film Festival (Italy), Mar del Plata (Argentina), Valdivia (Chile), Cinéma du réel (France), Ficunam (México), Pacific Film Archive Berkeley (San Francisco), Union Docs (Nueva York), Seoul International Film Festival (Corea), Punto de Vista (Pamplona), Fundación Serralves (Oporto), Macba (Barcelona), Museo de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid).

As an artist he has worked with performing arts figures and companies such as Itziar Okariz, La Tristura, El Conde de Torreñiel and Sra. Polaróiska. In 2019 he presented his first narrative fiction, *Geometría* (2019), published by Incorpora (Barcelona).

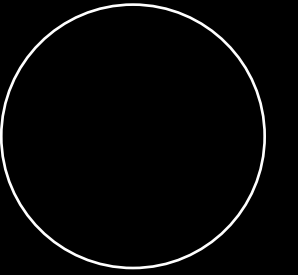
Sobre todo de noche (Foremost by night) is his first feature fiction film.

FILMOGRAPHY:

2014, *Cosas que ya no existen* (short) / 2013, *Visiones* (short) / 2012, *Invisible* (doc-experimental) / 2010, *El mar* (short) / 2009, *Zortzi-Bereratzi* (short) / 2008, *Apuntes para una película de espías* (short) / 2008, *Cinco películas breves* (short) / 2007, *Decir adiós* (short) / 2006, *Wrócic/ Volver* (short).



COPRODUCERS



LA TERMITA FILMS is a production company created in 2011 by filmmakers Isa Campo and Isaki Lacuesta in Girona. Their list of awards includes two Golden Shells at the San Sebastian Film Festival, or the recent Goya 2023 for Best Adapted Screenplay for *Un año, una noche*, Berlinale, Official Selection, 2022. Their films have been screened at film festivals around the world and have been the subject of retrospectives and exhibitions in prestigious international art centers such as the MOMA NY, Lincoln Center, Anthology Film Archives (New York), CCCB (Barcelona), Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris), National Gallery (Washington), Swiss cinematheque, Filmoteca Española...

ATEKALEUN (Tamara García) and **CSC FILMS** (Katixa de Silva) are two young production companies based in the Basque Country. They have been in charge of the production management and executive production of *Foremost by night*. Both production companies focus their work on promoting new cinematographic talents

INICIA FILMS (Valérie Delpierre) created her company in Barcelona in 2006 to focus on the release of new talents and special attention to international co-productions. *20,000 species of bees*, Estibaliz Urresola, Berlinale 2023, Best Lead Performance Award *La Maternal*, Pilar Palomero, San Sebastian Festival 2022, Silver Shell for Best Female Performance *Las niñas*, Pilar Palomero, 2020,

Goya Awards 2021, Best Film, Best New Director, Best Original Screenplay, Best Photography. *Summer 1993*, Carla Simón, Berlinale 2017, Best First Feature.

UKBAR FILMES (Pablo Iraola) is the Portuguese co-producer of the project. They co-produce auteur cinema with presence in international festivals such as *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*, Terry Gilliam, Cannes 2018, *Super Natural*, Jorge Jácome, Berlinale 2022), *Gaza, Mon Amour*, Mohammed y Ahmad Abou Nasser y Ahmad Abou Nasser, Venice 2020.

4A4 PRODUCTIONS (Andrea Queralt) is the French co-producer of the film. Queralt is actually co-producing “*After*”, the new film by Oliver Laxe, with whom she had already worked in “*Fire Will Come*” - 2019 (Cannes Film Festival, Un certain Regard - Jury Prize) and “*Pepe*” by Nelson Carlo de los Santos Arias and “*Mare’s nest*” by Ben Rivers. In 2022 4A4 premiered at Locarno Festival Santiago Fillol’s “*Matadero*”.



CAST

LOLA DUEÑAS IS *VERA*

2019, *Viaje al cuarto de una madre*, Celia Rico.

2017, *Zama*, Lucrecia Martel.

2013, *Los amantes pasajeros*, Pedro Almodóvar.

2009, *Los abrazos rotos*, Pedro Almodóvar.

2009, *Yo, también*, Antonio Naharro y Alvaro Pastor, Goya for the Best Female Performance, Silver Shell SSIFF for Best Actress

2006, *Volver*, Pedro Almodóvar. Best Actress Cannes International Film Festival.

2004, *Mar adentro*, Alejandro Amenábar, Goya for the Best Female Performance.





ANNA TORRENT IS *CORA*

2023, *Cerrar los ojos*, Víctor Erice.

2020, *Nieva en Benidorm*, Isabel Coixet.

2017, *Verónica*, Paco Plaza.

1999, *Yoyes*, Helena Taberna.

1996, *Tesis*, Alejandro Amenábar, Best Leading Actress New York Critics Association.

1995, *El palomo cojo*, Jaime de Armiñán.

1992, *Vacas*, Julio Médem.

1975, *Cría cuervos*, Carlos Saura.

1973, *El espíritu de la colmena*, Víctor Erice.

MANUEL EGOZKUE IS *EGOZ*

Manuel Egozkue (Madrid, 2002) makes his feature debut with this film.

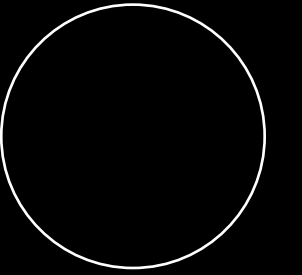
He has trained in acting, theater and dance with Fernanda Orazi, Roberto Cerdá, David Ulloa, Yolanda Vega, Kameron Steele, Tomás Cabané, La Tristura, Poliana Lima, Sleepwalk Collective and Vicente Arlandis.

The last short film in which he has worked as an actor (Arquitectura emocional, Elías Siminiani) has been awarded with the Goya Award for Best Short Film 2023.



ISAKI LACUESTA & VÍCTOR IRIARTE.

A CONVERSATION.



IL : SOBRE TODO DE NOCHE begins with a quote from Roberto Bolaño that announces that this is a crime story, the story of a heinous crime, “But it won’t seem so”, says Bolaño. Why did you decide to tell a story that is framed within the framework of film noir?

It is very curious to observe how your film, as it progresses, leaves aside that noir code to become another film. It seems to me a very free and brave gesture to transform a political-police story into an intimate melodrama. Tell us how you approached this metamorphosis.

VI : From the beginning of the project I imagined a film of revenge and violence. A cop thriller about a woman who has been trampled by the system and wants revenge. Therefore, the genre is already at the origin, yes. I also know that this story will be framed in reality, in a real news that I read in the press and that speaks of one of the darkest chapters in the recent history of Spain, a wound still open and unresolved. To this first character I add another, also a woman with her own life story and violence. And I add a third character, who acts as a bridge between the two women. And it is at that moment when I understand that the film is like a journey and that it will need to be able to transform itself, to be able to move from the political to the intimate, from film noir to melodrama, from one character to another, from one landscape to another.

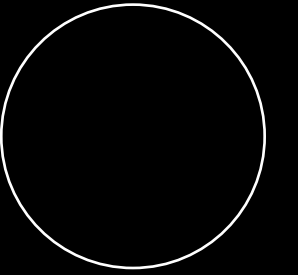
It is a gesture of narrative necessity and freedom. But, even if it changes, I think we never abandoned the idea of a political film, right? Because that intimacy between mother-son-mother is also deeply political. Emotional and political.

And I understand that you can say that our film changes as it progresses: there is a journey, there are three cities (Madrid, San Sebastian, Porto), there are three characters, there are decisions of form, structure and story that reinforce that idea.

But it changes in the same way that a film noir actress can dye her hair to be someone else. The color is different, now she is blonde, but in the end the film, the fugitive, remains the same: this is the story of a crime, the story of a wound, the story of a reunion.

IL : I remember that when you sent me the newspaper clipping you mentioned, you already had another very clear image that somehow is also the origin of the film: two middle-aged women lying on the banks of the Douro River. I was very surprised that with those two elements you set up so quickly the whole framework of what later became the film. It seems that everything was already there and that it was just a matter of pulling the thread. I would like you to remember that birth.

VI : At the origin of the film there is a brief news item published in the newspaper El País in February 1996. It said: 50 former students of an orphanage discover letters. A



suspect accused of stealing the institution's files.

The case interested me for two very powerful reasons: First, because of its direct link to the black history of Spain during the Franco regime and the transition. During the last years of the dictatorship and the beginning of democracy, the theft of babies from women was a practice protected by the post-Franco judicial system. The associations estimate that between 1940 and the 1990s, nearly 300,000 babies were stolen in Spain.

SOBRE TODO DE NOCHE proposes a story that is traversed by one of the most horrendous crimes in recent Spanish history, a crime that has never been brought to trial. In this sense, it is a political film, an exercise in memory, truth and reparation that uses the tools of film noir and melodrama to tell the story of these two women facing their destiny.

The second reason had to do with the human dimension of this story.

I imagined a country house by the Douro River, during the summer, at siesta time, with two women in their fifties sleeping in the garden outside, while the sound of cicadas took over everything. One, the biological mother. The other, the adoptive mother. In between, as a bridge, that son who has just discovered the true story of his two mothers, his own identity. What would these two women talk about? How would they face their past, their present and their future? How would they try to rewrite their destinies?

IL : If I had to explain in a simple way *Sobre todo de noche*, I would say

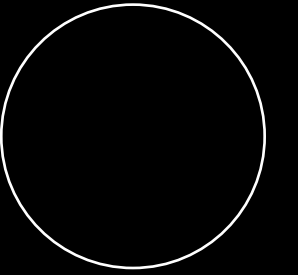
that it is the story of two women and a young man who, without knowing it, are intimate. And it is the story of how these three characters, when confronted with this unexpected intimacy, discover who they are.

A film so full of secrets and discoveries is a great acting challenge for the leading trio and it is evident that their work shines on screen. You did one of the most exhaustive castings I've ever seen, and then I was surprised by how many months you spent working with Lola Dueñas, Ana Torrent and Manuel Egozkue before shooting. Could you tell us what this process was like?

VI : When I write the first version of the film, I don't write it with any specific actress in mind. At that stage, Vera and Cora are two faceless, bodiless figures who only exist in the text. Vera wears two wristwatches like Pascale Ogier. Cora plays the piano. Even at the beginning I don't quite know who is who, I don't quite know how to tell them apart. That's when we started the casting process, which coincided with the months of confinement of the coronavirus. And I started to receive video files at home with Spanish actresses reading passages from the film.

I remember perfectly the moment when after a review of casting materials, Isa (Isa Campo, producer and co-writer) and you tell me with total certainty and conviction that Ana Torrent, of whom we had seen a video test, is Cora. "Victor, Ana is Cora", you both say without any doubt. And I was scared at first, for fear of the icon of that face and





those eyes that are the history of Spanish cinema. But days later, after several nights of reflection, I see it as clear as you do and Cora can no longer be anyone but Ana Torrent. She can't be anyone else but Ana Torrent. That moment redefines the film and rewrites it. And it helps us to find Vera.

I travel to Portugal to meet Lola Dueñas at Christmas 2020. Months before Lola had left me a message on my phone telling me that a mutual friend had told her about my film. And in that message she tells me that she is Vera.

A cab driver, a friend of Lola's, picks me up at Lisbon airport and takes me to a country house 40 minutes from the capital. Lola waits for me with an open bottle of wine and some baby squid with rice. I bring cheese. We spend two days talking, walking, cooking, listening to music and taking care of her cat Miguelito. And when I return home two days later, I know we have the movie. And now yes, Vera and Cora are Lola and Ana, with their gestures, looks, walk, pauses and voices.

I don't have the feeling of having rehearsed the film before shooting it. But it is true that I have been with the actresses for many months before the shooting: reading, talking, walking, sending audio messages, cooking, telling us about other films. Or dancing. I already knew Manuel Egozkue from a European theater tour we had done together with my colleagues from the La Tristura company. And on that trip we danced a lot of techno in clubs in Germany and Holland. In his case, when I saw him dance, when I saw him on stage during that tour, I knew he was going to be Egoz.

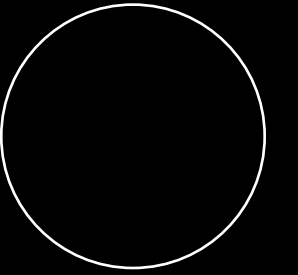
In this process it has been very exciting to see the respect and love of the actresses for

the text and to see how they have made these characters grow beyond what I could have ever imagined.

IL: There is a moment in the film when Vera says that the only thing they have not been able to take away from her is her story and how she tells it. Let's talk about how you tell the film, let's talk about formal decisions, let's talk about all the materials that you mix with total freedom and how you manage to generate a clear unity of style.

Because your film is a film of spies and detectives, of letters read in voice-over, of chapters written on screen, it's a nineteenth-century Jules Verne-style adventure story, it's a musical (the whole San Sebastian block looks like a contemporary musical to me), it's a fado, it's a film of portraits and landscapes filmed in 16mm, a heist film in the Louis Feuillade style, and it's also a ghost film. How do you go about relating in your head such apparently disparate elements and how do you discover that they inevitably make up, inevitably, the same film?

VI: There is something that you and I have always claimed and that has to do with what you are asking me: we are storytellers. We have always defended storytelling as a space for work and experimentation. Neither you nor I are form filmmakers. I mean, we have not been poets of experimental cinema and our search has not had so much to do with



the abstract lights, shadows, colors and sounds of the cinematographer, but with voices. We are more spiritualists of cinema: we like to listen to the voices from beyond and we like to tell what we have heard. In our cinema, the story is part of the formal search.

SOBRE TODO DE NOCHE establishes a very simple framework: this is a story in the form of a journey. Vera writes a letter, Egoz writes a letter, Cora writes a letter. And the three characters meet on the banks of the Duero River. It is their story that we share. And there they add the thematic layers that we have already talked about: the story of a crime, the story of a wound, the story of an unexpected love, the story of three lives and their destinies. And all the elements of language that we have learned from cinema and other arts are added in a very free and unprejudiced way.

It is a strange balance, an alchemy. It is about relating all these elements, not from the head, not from the security of the text (which little by little has to be erased), but from another much more primitive, visceral and sentimental place. Poetic. Because we have to tell the story of these characters, give them a voice, yes, but at the same time we have to preserve on the screen some of the mystery of their lives.

IL: Sobretudo de noite is a phrase from a poem by one of the heteronyms of the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. Tell us about the process of naming this film, because in its different phases it has been called by different names. Why did you finally choose Sobre todo de noite? What does this title mean to you?

VI : The first versions of the script were titled “Tres” (Three) and later “Reescritura” (Rewriting). Sometimes the titles are very clear from the beginning, but in our case we were trying different options that helped us to go through the writing phases. At the beginning, the triangle formed by Vera, Egoz and Cora seemed very important to us and the number 3 served to name and reinforce that geometry. But there came a time when it became very obvious. Something similar happened with “Rewriting”: the three characters faced the possibility of rewriting their destinies and imagining another possible life. But the word “Rewrite” seemed very mental to us.

I knew I needed something that connected in a subterranean and mysterious way with the story we were telling. Something that came from somewhere else, less direct, more spectral. I was looking for a title that sounded like a dream. And one day you told me that you had always wanted to make a film called *Sobre todo de noite*, but you didn’t know yet what it was about or if you were ever going to make it. That title, as soon as I heard it, took me away. And then you gave it to me. From then on it was very clear that that strange poem by Fernando Pessoa (*Sim, é claro / O Universo é negro / Sobretudo de noite*) captured the essence of our story: it has something animal, cosmic, luminous, musical, deep and very mysterious that gives a new dimension to our film. It makes it better.

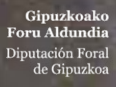


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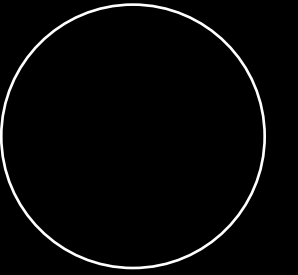
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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

BASQUE.
AUDIOVISUAL.

CONTACT



PRODUCTION

Andrea Queralt
+33 782 86 03 60
andrea.queralt@4a4productions.fr

WORLD SALES

ALPHA VIOLET

Co-Ceo Sales & Acquisitions
Virginie Devesa + 336 2041 1137 virginie@alphaviolet.com
Keiko Funato + 336 2983 5108 keiko@alphaviolet.com

Festivals' coordination
Fiorella Aguayo festivals@alphaviolet.com

DISTRIBUTION IN SPAIN

ATALANTE

Ramiro Ledo ramiro@atalantecinema.com

Diana Santamaria diana@atalantecinema.com
www.atalantecinema.com

INTERNATIONAL PUBLICIST

CLAUDIA TOMASSINI & ASSOCIATES

Claudia Tomassini
press@claudiatomassini.com
+ 49 173 205 5794

Paola Schettino Nobile
paola@claudiatomassini.com

Nicola Passarotto
nicola@claudiatomassini.com

COMMUNICATION

SURIA COMMUNICATIONS

Sonia Uría
suria@suriacomunicacion.com
+34 686 639 650



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