



La mujer de barro

The Mud Woman

Sergio Castro San Martín

Producer Carlos Nuñez, Gabriela Sandoval, Gonzalo Bubis, Marco Díaz. **Production companies** Storyboard Media (Santiago, Chile); HD Argentina (Buenos Aires, Argentina); Prize Producciones (Ovalle, Chile). **Director** Sergio Castro San Martín. **Screenplay** Sergio Castro San Martín. **Director of photography** Sergio Armstrong. **Production design** Marcela Urivi. **Costume** Marcela Urivi. **Make-up** Cez Navotka. **Sound** Erick del Valle. **Music** Sebastián Vergara. **Sound design** Roberto Espinoza. **Editor** Andrea Chignoli, Sergio Castro San Martín. **Cast** Catalina Saavedra (María), Paola Lattus (Violeta), Daniel Antivilo (Raul), Maite Neira (Teresa), Elsa Poblete (Rosa), Tiare Pino (Carla), Angel Lattus (Dario).

DCP, colour. 92 min. Spanish.

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World sales Media Luna New Films

Maria, a single mother in her early forties, needs money and thus sets off for a job as a harvest worker with a revolver in her pocket as a precaution, leaving her daughter Teresa in the care of her good friend Rosa. At the farm, Maria encounters Raúl, her supervisor and former tormentor. She sullenly carries out her work and socializes little with the other female labourers. Only occasionally does Violeta, a younger, peroxide blonde with whom Maria shares a room, succeed in motivating her taciturn companion to go out with her. When Raúl once again abuses Maria, she silently endures her pain. However, when Violeta has a serious accident at work shortly afterwards, Maria decides to take revenge: for all the past scores left unsettled, the brutal power structures and all the exploitation.

Castro tells this story with great calm and quiet tonality. The camera skillfully captures the tense atmosphere of scorching heat and enduring drought in northern Chile, but also the impassive beauty of its rural locales. The film sets the vulnerability of the female body against its toughness and the tender solidarity of women.

Hanna Keller

The life of a seasonal Worker

The idea for *La mujer de barro* came about when I heard several news stories that took place in different regions of Chile, all related to the seasonal agricultural workers. I find it equally interesting and contradictory to observe these fruit pickers working ten hours a day under conditions that are almost inhuman, in landscapes of breath-taking beauty; how they become victims of their fear and sometimes even violence by the contractors of this industry. The film was inspired by a news story about a woman named Maria Cartagena, who suffered serious injury due to the use of a chemical, about which she was not warned, in a cherry orchard in 1985. Maria did seasonal work to earn enough money to visit her brother, who had been a political prisoner since New Year's Eve of 1973. With these real events as the starting point, I wanted to develop a fictional story for the character of Maria Cartagena, which I wanted to tell using the documentary format. Within the group of seasonal workers I met while carrying out research for this film, I was especially struck by a woman possessed with such deep desire to provide financially for her family that she is able to transcend, day by day, the darkest and most inhumane elements of this work.

Excellent wines and miserable working conditions

Other factors of great dramatic importance in the life of a seasonal worker are migration and the fear that grows in these women when they leave their homes and families. I also met workers who faced non-fulfilment of agreements on the part of their employers, meaning they did not get paid. It's paradoxical to think that zones like this produce wine of world-class quality, but under conditions that are unhealthy and unacceptable for any human.

I was interested in making a film that focuses on the issue of work, because in this place that we spend a great part of our lives and where fears and joys are manifest. It was also important to me to show landscapes that are unknown even to many Chileans.

With *La mujer de barro*, I wanted to make a socio-critical film about the reality of agricultural work in Chile and specifically, the situation of the seasonal workers on Chilean farms. Following this main objective is the clear intention to build a social picture from the workers' perspective, to establish a female microcosm, whereby the relevance of the context is provided not by appearances, but by the fact that it is all part of a same world, in which relationship are as important as economic interests.

A female microcosmos

La mujer de barro leads the viewer into the cosmos of the women fruit pickers, without issuing judgements about the characters or the main character. The film presents real facts based on research and fictionalised situations reflecting this same reality. In this sense, the film intends to 'show' and to 'observe' without any moral judgments, which we believe to be the viewer's job.

The question posed by the film about humane working conditions gains a dramatic importance when contrasted with the natural beauty of the landscapes where *La mujer de barro* takes place. Chile's so-called fourth region, the region of Coquimbo, and more precisely the area of the Andes foothills, is known as one of the most beautiful parts of the Chilean north because of its geographic virtues, and this is contrasted with the hostility and toughness of the hundreds of women who are victims of this system of work. All of the actions of our main character, Maria Cartagena, are shown from a documentary and biographical perspective. The film is divided into three acts, corresponding to the central themes of her

life: family, work and the spiritual revenge she undertakes. The film closely follows this woman and her journey, which makes her look lost in a land that belongs to no one, a paradise that means nothing at all to her or the other women.

Somehow the movie is a chronological cycle: it begins with rain and ends with water, surrounding the raw and cold state of Maria Cartagena's life.

Sergio Castro San Martín



Sergio Castro San Martín was born in El Salvador, Chile, in 1979. From 1998 until 2004, he studied Architecture at the Universidad Mayor in Santiago, Chile. From 2005 to 2008, he studied Screenwriting and Directing at the Chilean Film School in Santiago. He made his final thesis film, *Paseo/The Walk*, in 2009. Since then, he has made numerous documentary, music, and

television films. Alongside his work as a director, Sergio Castro San Martín also teaches directing and editing at various universities in Santiago. *La mujer de barro* is his second feature film.

Films

2005: *Sincopado/Syncopated* (20 min.). 2005: *Trainticket* (24 min.). 2006: *Ojo de buey/Bull's Eye* (10 min.). 2007: *Primer Tango/First Tango* (10 min.). 2009: *Paseo/The Walk* (75 min.). 2011: *Electrodomesticos el frio misterio/Electrodomesticos, The Cold Mystery* (126 min.). 2012: *Un Fotógrafo/A Photographer* (25 min.). 2012: *8 Fotógrafos/8 Photographers* (35 min.). 2012: *A Day With Tortoise* (62 min.). 2015: *La mujer de barro/The Mud Woman*.