



Mar

Dominga Sotomayor

Producer Iván Eibuszyc, Lisandro Rodríguez. **Production companies** Cinestación (Santiago, Chile); Frutacine (Buenos Aires, Argentina). **Director** Dominga Sotomayor. **Screenplay** Lisandro Rodríguez, Vanina Montes, Dominga Sotomayor, Manuela Martelli. **Director of photography** Nicolás Ibieta. **Art director** Limarí Ascui. **Sound** Julia Huberman. **Sound design** Julia Huberman. **Editor** Catalina Marín.

Cast Lisandro Rodríguez (Martín), Vanina Montes (friend), Andrea Strenitz (mother).

DCP, colour. 60 min. Spanish.

Premiere 9 October 2014, Festival Internacional de Cine de Valdivia. **World sales** New Europe Film Sales

January 2014 on the Argentine coast. Martín and his girlfriend Eli are on holiday in Villa Gesell, a beach resort south of Buenos Aires. The sun is scorching. They read horoscopes, slurp maté, play guitar, and cool off in the ocean and the resort pool. The conversations on the beach and at dinner revolve around life and how it progresses. Nights are punctuated by dogs barking on the street and the piercing sirens of automobile alarms. This 30-something urban couple's relationship seems troubled and on the verge of falling apart. The sudden appearance of Martín's mother does not ease the tension, but just intensifies the distance between the two of them. Reality invades this fictional story when several dozen tourists are struck by lightning on the beach during a storm and three of them die. Dominga Sotomayor's *Mar* impressively dissects the peculiarities of everyday life and directs our attention to the nuances of what is perceived as trivial. Based on the intimate portrait of a relationship and family configuration, it creates a subtle picture of a society in the elusive grip of unconsciousness.

Caroline Pitzen

The inner deadlock

Mar is a film that was created spontaneously, without very clear intentions or expectations. As the starting point, I took an idea that came from the lead actors, Lisandro and Vanina. A month later we were shooting on an Argentinian beach, with a small group of friends that I invited to collaborate. We shot for eight days, working around a shifting anecdote, allowing improvisation and finding a narrative as we went along. All of this was very refreshing, and also very different from the experience on my first film, *De jueves a domingo* (Thursday Till Sunday), which was carefully planned with a longer development process.

I'm interested in portraying everyday situations from a certain distance, one in which what's familiar can become threatening or strange. To be able to capture this margin where the ordinary and extraordinary coexist.

The film observes the deadlock this young couple find themselves in during a vacation at the beach. The man's mother arrives and the distance between them becomes even more tangible. While we were shooting, a tragic event happened on the location: a lightning strike killed three people on the sand and the town was shocked. This made us stop. We brought this into the story, and it opened another dimension in the narrative, which confronts the subtlety of the emotional conflict with the irreversible cycles of life and death.

Dominga Sotomayor

"The big scene never arrives, like in real life"

How did the project start?

Dominga Sotomayor: It all started when I met Lisandro Rodríguez, the lead actor, at a film festival at the end of 2013. We realised that we had similar interests, so the idea of doing something together came up. The starting point was a memory of a holiday he had with Vanina – his girlfriend, and also an actress – and also the idea of them playing a couple. When I came back to Chile, I called together a crew of friends that had worked with me before, and who were willing to travel to the coast of Argentina, where we had a place to stay. Lisandro contacted the other possible actors in Buenos Aires, and a few days later Iván Eibuszyc got involved in the project as our Argentinian co-producer. Everything worked out fast; the only thing missing, a week before shooting, was the screenplay. From the first encounter with Lisandro and the beginning of the shooting, it had only been two months. It was all very fast and spontaneous.

Tell us about the screenplay, the story and the real events during the shooting.

Lisandro had taken some notes on his phone during some vacations with Vanina in Mar de las Pampas, a beach resort near Villa Gesell. That was our starting point. The text was about a couple and their different perspectives on life. It was written in a reflexive and personal tone, without scenes. So we had the concept of a couple stuck on the beach, some notes from Lisandro and Vanina's real vacations, and pictures of the location. Thinking about the real possibilities we would have during eight days at Villa Gesell, Manuela Martelli and I wrote ten screenplay pages that consisted of some scenes without dialogue and a tentative structure. Then, when we wrote the outlines of scenes, we came up with possible situations and I

let the fiction in. I wanted to distance it from reality and to obtain that freedom.

With that premise in mind, a fiction was sketched about a couple in crisis that travels to the Argentinian coast in the summer to spend a few days, which are then disrupted by the visit of the man's mother.

That was the founding base from where we started shooting, open to improvisation and chance. In some way, nature and the location started trespassing into the story. They were always playing with the idea of how fragile fiction is, but it became much more evident when a lighting strike killed a group of teenagers on the beach. I think that *Mar* was a living story. We were framing things apparently irrelevant, recording daily situations that seemed to have no importance and reacting to what was happening.

In that sense, even though the creative structure and production process of *Mar* were the complete opposites of *De jueves a domingo* (Thursday Till Sunday) it follows the same line: an observation of everyday life, fragility and life itself. *Mar* is a film where the big scene never arrives, just like in real life.

What was special about the shooting location and Villa Gesell?

It is a very special place. It's a popular beach town that gets crowded during the summer. The variable weather and the washed-out, monochromatic colours create a timeless atmosphere. We discovered Villa Gesell because the owner of a hostel there is an actress, and she lent us the place to stay and shoot. She even played a small part in the film.

Leaving Chile to shoot was very special. We were a small mixed group of Chilean and Argentinians, who became like a family. For me, film has nothing to do with nationalism, and this experience confirmed it. I now have the feeling that I could shoot anywhere, that what interests me in movies is not something related to countries, but something beyond those boundaries. I felt comfortable shooting as a foreigner in Villa Gesell; seeing everything for the first time and without the prejudices that a local could have.

What was it like working with a reduced crew?

I felt that the experience was closer to the process of a theatre company rather than a film production. We would all cooperate on everything; we would solve everything amongst ourselves. Lisandro cooked in between scenes, I would buy groceries for breakfast, and everybody would participate in choosing locations and proposing ideas. The crew was composed of ten people, including actors, and we had eight days to find locations, produce and shoot. It was sometimes intense, but at the same time very rewarding. Sleeping in the same place in which we were shooting gave us flexibility. It was a good exercise in making a film with just the essentials. I think this experience really changed the way I want to approach filmmaking from now on.

Source: production



© Sebastian Utreras

Dominga Sotomayor was born in Santiago, Chile in 1985. After graduating from the Universidad Católica de Chile in 2007 with a degree on Audiovisual Direction, Dominga Sotomayor got her master's degree in Film Direction at the Escola de Cinema y Audiovisuals de Catalunya (ESCAC) in Barcelona.

In 2008, she founded the production company Cinestación, where she works as director and producer. Dominga Sotomayor also works as a university lecturer in film. She has made videos for exhibitions including *Little Sun* by Olafur Eliasson (Tate Modern, London 2012). She is currently pursuing an MA in Fine Arts at the Universidad de Chile.

Films

2007: *Noviembre/November* (15 min.). 2007: *Debajo/Below* (18 min.). 2008: *La montaña/The Mountain* (10 min.). 2009: *Videojuego/Videogame* (6 min.). 2012: *De jueves a domingo/Thursday till Sunday* (94 min.). 2013: *La isla/The Island* (30 min.). 2014: *Mar*.