

SPUTNIK FILMS, MURILLO CINE, LA POST PRODUCCIONES,
PROMENADES FILMS & TOTEM FILMS PRESENT



SEMAINE
DE LA CRITIQUE
CANNES 2019

Ceniza Negra

A FILM BY SOFÍA QUIRÓS ÚBEDA

STARRING SMACHILEEN GUTIÉRREZ, HUMBERTO SAMUELS, HORTENSIA SMITH & KEHA BROWN DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY FRANCISCA SAEZ AGUIRTO EDITING CARI EL ESCALANTE SOUND DESIGN CHRISTIAN COSGROVE & CAMILO JIMÉNEZ ORIGINAL SCORE WISSAM HOUEJ PRODUCTION DESIGN CAROLINA LETI CASTING & CREATIVE ASSISTANT FLORENCIA ROYLICH SOUND ERICK YARGAS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FELIPE ZUÑIGA PRODUCERS SPUTNIK FILMS CO-PRODUCERS MURILLO CINE, LA POST PRODUCCIONES & PROMENADES FILMS IN ASSOCIATION WITH ALIA DEFINICIÓN ARGENTINA, YOGAN FILMS, INGENIO DIGITAL, FARO DIGITAL, CHRISTIAN HERRERA HERRERA & BORA FILMS PRODUCER MARIANA MURILLO EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MARIANA MURILLO, SOFÍA QUIRÓS ÚBEDA, CECILIA SALIM, MILLARAY CORTÉS, MATÍAS ECHEVERRÍA, SAMUEL CHAUVIN, RODOLFO QUIROS, ESTEBAN ZABALA A FILM BY SOFÍA QUIRÓS ÚBEDA

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Ceniza Negra

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SCREENING SCHEDULE CANNES 2019

FRIDAY 17TH

18:00 market | palais i

SUNDAY 19TH

11:30 official | espace miramar
17:15 official | espace miramar
22:30 official | espace miramar

MONDAY 20TH

08:30 official | espace miramar

WEDNESDAY 22ND

15:30 market | lérins 3



Selva, thirteen, discovers that when we die we just shed our skin. We can turn into wolfs, goats, shadows, or anything that fantasy allows us to be.

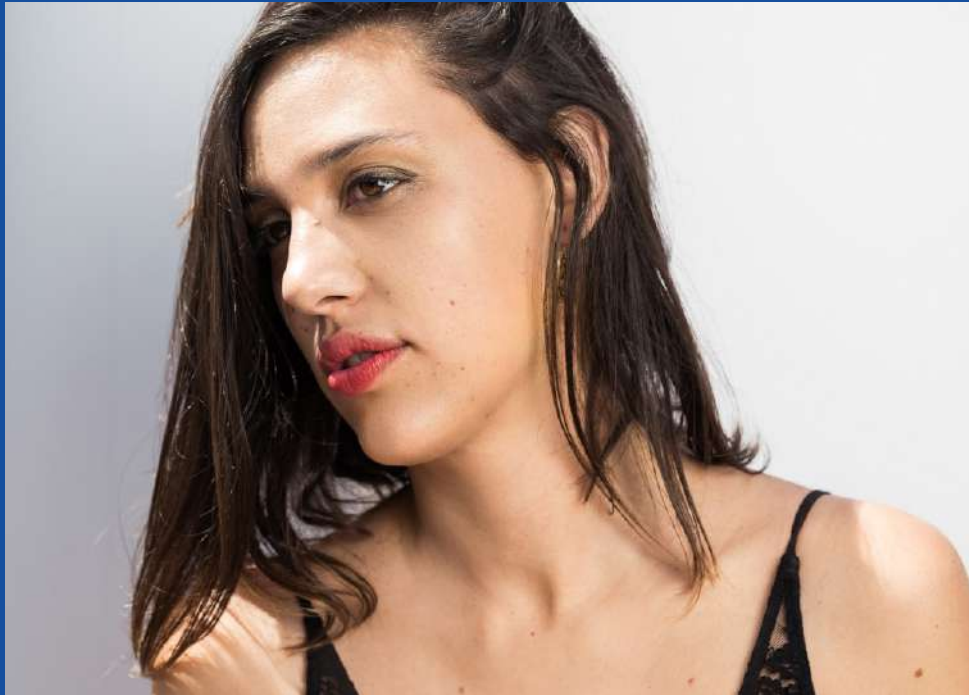




synopsis

Selva (13) lives in a Caribbean coastal town. After the sudden disappearance of her only motherly figure, Selva is the only one left to take care of her grandfather, who doesn't want to live anymore. Between mysterious shadows and wild games, she debates whether helping her grandfather achieve his desire, even though this might mean going through her last moments of childhood alone.

director's biography



SOFÍA QUIRÓS UBEDA

Sofía was born in 1989 and studied Sound and Image Design at the University of Buenos Aires. Since her first short films, Sofía has focused on working with non-actors and actresses, creating films that explore their characters intimate worlds with a poetic vision that highlights atmosphere and emotion. In 2016, her short film *Selva* premiered at La Semaine de la Critique of the Cannes Film Festival 2017. Since then, it went to screen in more than 40 cities around the world gathering awards like the TV5 Prize in Biarritz and the 'Women in Film and TV Award' given by the Guanajuato IFF. Her first feature film *Ceniza Negra (Land of Ashes)* was filmed in the Costa Rican and explores topics such as mourning and the end of childhood. Its premiere will be held at the 58th Semaine de la Critique in 2019.

director's interview

What's *Ceniza Negra* about?

– *Ceniza Negra* tells the story of Selva (13) and how she learns about life through the death of her closest family members. It is the story of how a girl goes through the end of her childhood, as she helps the person she loves the most to die.

The film is a continuation of *Selva* that you made a few years ago, also showing in Critics Week at Cannes. Where did the original idea come from?

– I started working on the feature film that would turn into *Ceniza Negra* 5 years ago. The short film, *Selva*, was born mid-way, from an impulse I had to go out and capture sounds and images of everything we were developing for the feature. It was an approximation to *Ceniza Negra*'s atmosphere, a deepening of the main character, and exploration of a way of Directing children and teenagers; but most of all: an opportunity that allowed us to find Smachleen Gutiérrez, who became the lead actress in both films. The short film ended but we never stopped working after it. *Ceniza Negra* and Smachleen grew up together.

What are the themes in the movie?

– *Ceniza Negra* explores themes like the magic in mourning, the end of childhood, transmutation after death, the symbiotic relationship between a grandchild and

her grandfather, the act of accompanying someone through their death and learning to be left alone.

How did you go about casting? Can you go through the actors and tell us why you chose them?

– During development and pre-production, we held an open casting and saw more than 600 people from the Limón province.

Smachleen was the first girl we met. As I said, we found her two days before shooting *Selva*, the short film, and we had a connection from the first moment. During two years after that, I crafted our film's character around my work with her.

We met Humberto, the grandfather, in a home for elderly people. It was also love-at-first-sight. The process with him was long and intense, seeking for him to understand what making a film meant while getting him used to leaving home, changing his schedule and routines. We saw him blossom, and rejuvenate 10 years, filling our set with joy on a daily basis.

Hortencia, who plays Elena, is a local dancer from the community where the film was shot. The strength of her body and expression convinced us that she would remain in the audiences' mind until the end of the film.

“

The process was ludic: the whole crew played constantly with the actors, we danced to Elvis Presley or reggaeton music every day.

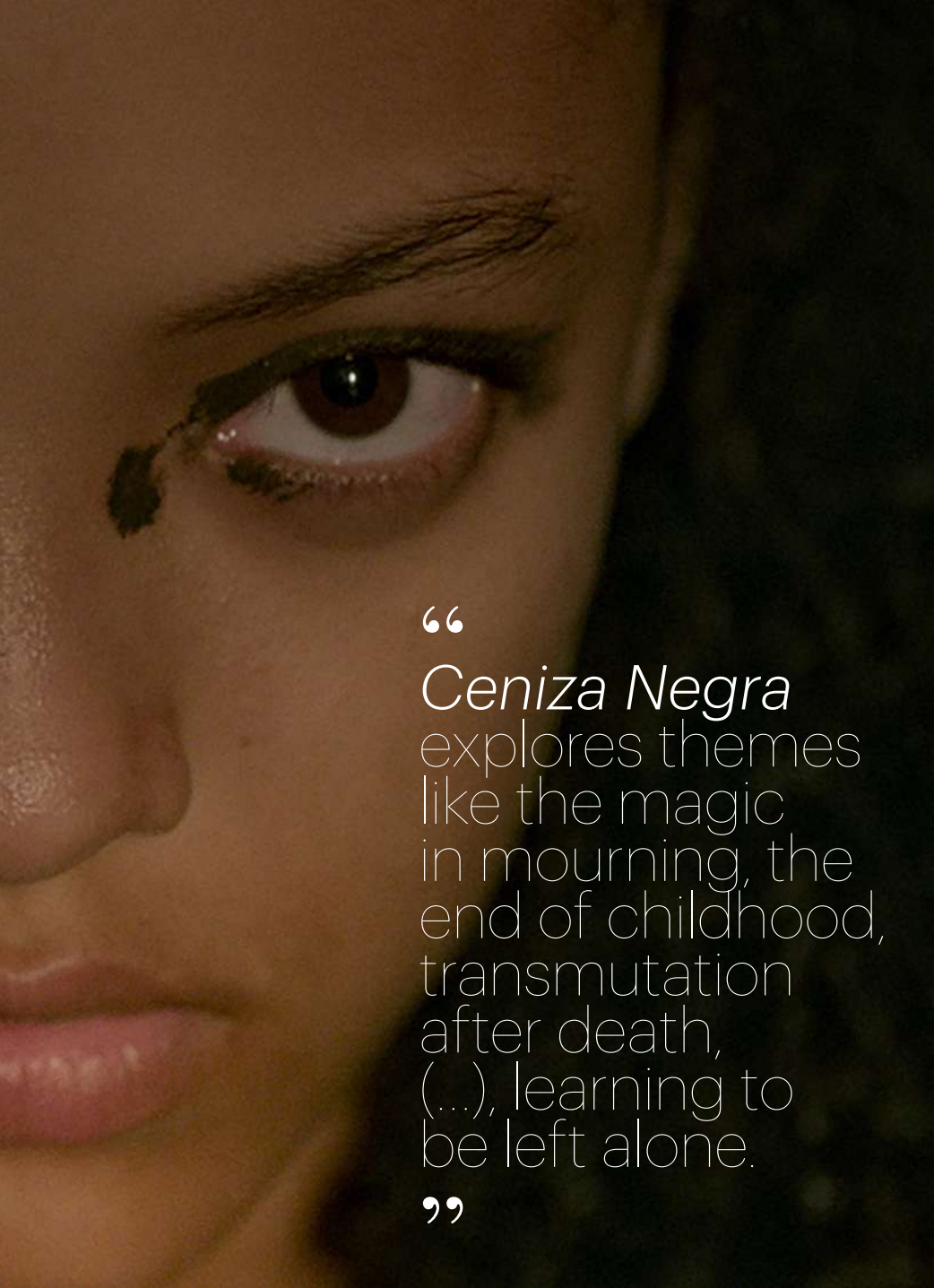
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Smachleen Gutierrez, also in *Selva*, is utterly mesmerizing, what do you think it is that makes her so special?

– In Smachleen I found something wonderful from the first moment: her capacity to give her self completely. These last four years I saw a spontaneous, creative, powerful and committed girl growing up. The mix between her discipline and her freshness was key to interpret our main character without turning her into a victim, but making her a joyful, strong and profound girl. She is a very special person, who has lived the process with complete naturality, very centered in her axis and connected to reality. Knowing her has been one of the best gifts this film has given me.

→





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”

Your film crew is predominantly female, was this a conscious choice?

– Yes, this was the result of a natural process. Last few years I had been working with the Producer, the Casting Director and the Director of Photography in the creative development of the film. They were all part of the creative decisions as we felt comfortable working in a collaborative way. When we started to choose the rest of the crew, we wanted to continue with this energy and achieved a production where the heads of department were women.

There's no doubt that this is a reflection of the women in new generations, and how we decide to lead, which makes me proud and makes me feel safe in my workspace, free of pressure and prejudice. The participation of creative men, sensible and involved, gave the team the balance it needed.

Talk a little bit about the shoot, were there any challenges?

– The shooting was wonderful and intense! Humberto and Smachleen had several weeks living with us before starting main photography, as we rehearsed in their daily living to ensure the process of going into character was symbiotic and to become -in a way- like a real family. On set, we were at least 35 people, and we lived together in front of the beach for 40 days. We had a very flexible method, working very connected with nature and the unexpected element of sudden rains and storms!

The process was ludic: the whole crew played constantly with the actors, we danced

to Elvis Presley or reggaeton music every day. It was a trip back to childhood for everyone, and a look into our old age!

We used plenty of improvisation with the non-actors, allowing them to propose and where magical and unexpected situations completed the shooting schedule!

It was a beautiful shoot, marked by the symbiosis between old age and the end of childhood: games like old “Zorro” dates to the '50s, Elvis Presley and dancing reggaeton.

The film has been a long time in the making; you've taken the idea to many festivals to get funding, etc. Talk a little bit about your journey with this project

– It's been 5 years! First I started working on the idea of the film, I lived in Argentina at the time, but knew I wanted to film in Costa Rica and specifically in the Caribbean. Mariana, the producer, came on board a little bit later and thus began a process that took us to regional labs (Tres Puertos Cine, Bolivia Lab, Ibermedia's development lab, Lobo Lab) to work on the project and start to get a sense of who our partners might be.

After that, we won both industry recognition at the Costa Rica International Film Festival (CRFIC) and the Cartagena de India's International Film Festival. This was very important because it brought funding but also worked as great windows for the film.

Later on, with our co-producers on board, we got the support of the TFI Latin America Fund, Costa Rica's National Film Fund, the Ibermedia Program, the Aide aux cinémas du monde and the World Cinema Fund.

While all of this happened our team never stopped working on the script, visiting the Caribbean to investigate, scout and look for possible actors and actresses. We wrote and discussed every draft and worked as a unit keeping in mind that our story is the heart of our project. This led us to two very important writing experiences: Ibermedia's Project Development Workshop and NextStep, organized by La Semaine de la Critique.

Later on, after shooting, we were lucky enough to participate in important work-in-progress such as CRFIC, Catapulta in FICUNAM, Primera Mirada in IFF Panama and Cine en Construcción in Cinélatino, Rencontres de Toulouse.

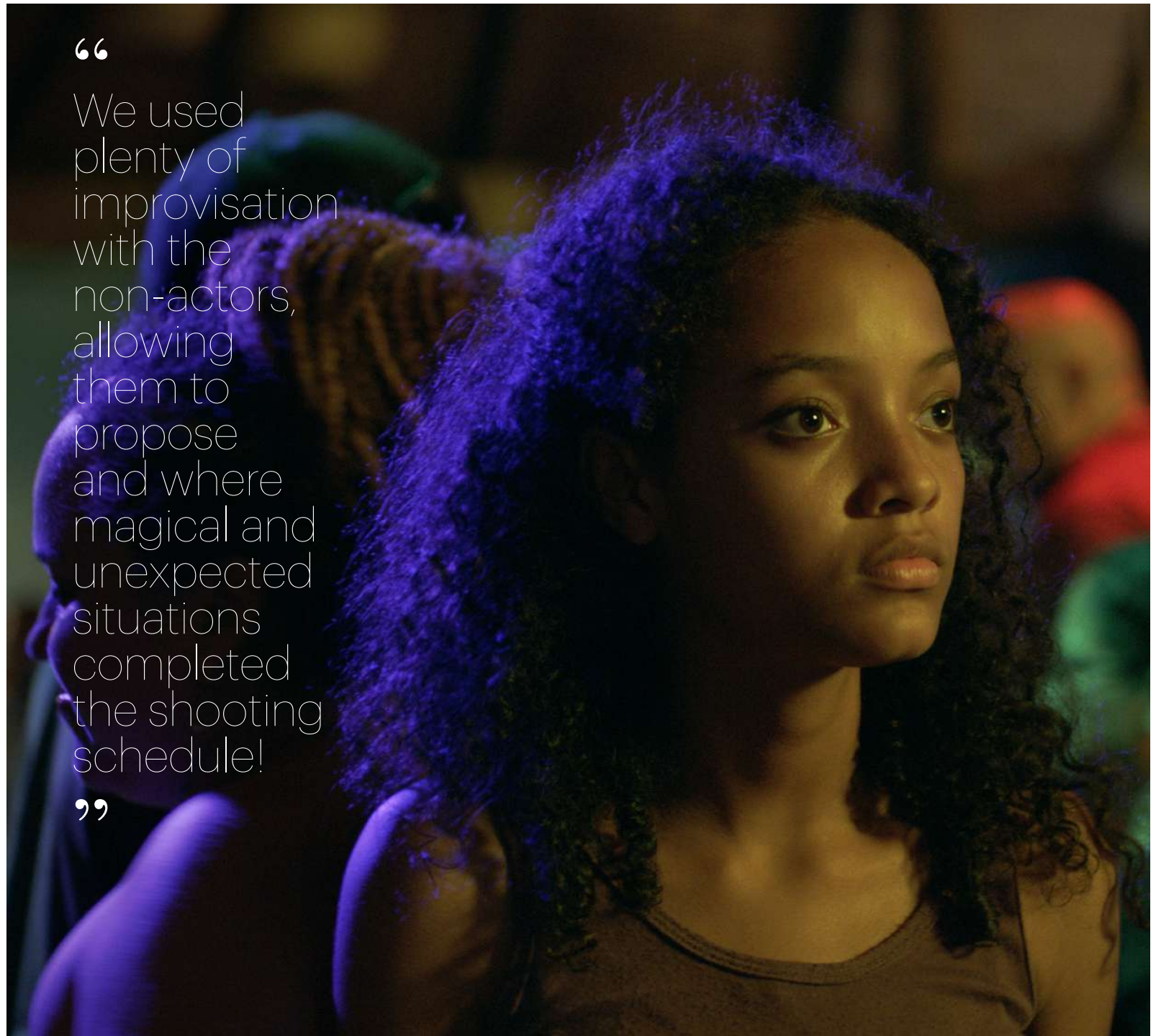
This is your first feature film, how has the process differed from the short films you've made?

– The process of doing the short film *Selva* was very spontaneous, fast and impulsive, very free. *Ceniza Negra* was completely different: longer, profound and detailed. It has been a wonderful experience where the limits between daily living and filmmaking seems to fade. It is a film that has helped me go through mourning, separations, and every little thing that nurtured the script. The process has been of complete surrender for 5 years, a lot of intuition, patience and most of all: trust.

“

We used plenty of improvisation with the non-actors, allowing them to propose and where magical and unexpected situations completed the shooting schedule!

”



credits

CENIZA NEGRA

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Sofía Quirós Ubeda

WITH Smachleen Gutiérrez, Humberto Samuels, Hortensia Smith & Keha Brown

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Francisca Saéz Agurto

EDITING Ariel Escalante Meza

PRODUCTION DESIGN Carolina Lett

SOUND DESIGN Christian Cosgrove

ORIGINAL SCORE Wissam Hojejj

CASTING DIRECTOR Florencia Rovlich

CO-PRODUCERS Cecilia Salim, Matías Echeverría & Millaray Cortés, Samuel Chauvin

PRODUCER Mariana Murillo

TECHNICAL INFO

Drama, Color, 2019 / Costa Rica, Argentine, Chile, FranceW

ORIGINAL TITLE Ceniza Negra

DURATION 82 min / LANGUAGE Español / FORMAT 4K / SOUND 5.1

PRODUCED BY Sputnik Films, Murillo Cine,
La POST Producciones, Promenades Films

WITH THE SUPPORT OF Programa Ibermedia, Aide aux cinémas du Monde,
World Cinema Fund, Tribeca Latin American Film Fund,
National Film Fund 'El Fauno', Costa Rica International Film Festival,
Cinergia, XII International Producer's Meeting FICCI.

TRAJECTORY Tres Puertos Cine, Bolivia Lab, Lobo Lab, NextStep,
Curso de Desarrollo de Proyectos Cinematográficos de Ibermedia,
Catapulta FICUNAM, Primera Mirada IFF Panama
and Cine en Construcción Cinélatino, Rencontres de Toulouse.
