

# WOMEN OF THE MINE (MUJERES DE LA MINA)



A FILM BY

**MALENA BYSTROWICZ & LORELEY UNAMUNO**

60 mins/Color/2014/Spanish, English Subtitles/Argentina



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## **FESTIVALS AND AWARDS**

10th International Festival of Human Rights, Sucre, Bolivia – Winner of the Pukañawi Eye of Latin American Award

5<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival for Gender Equality, “Women in Focus,” Argentina

7<sup>th</sup> International Festival of Film and Video Alternative and Community “EYE TO SANCOCHO,” Bogotá, Colombia

6<sup>th</sup> International Unseen Film Festival “Film Sozialak,” Spain

6<sup>th</sup> Festival of Indigenous Peoples, Film Forum of Valparaiso, Chile

7<sup>th</sup> The Image of Peoples Film Festival, Ibarra, Ecuador

1st “Women’s Director International Film Festival, New Delhi, India

5<sup>th</sup> Festival of Political Cinema Directed by Women, Madrid, Spain

33<sup>rd</sup> International Film Festival of Uruguay, Uruguay Foundation of Cinema, Montevideo, Uruguay

32<sup>nd</sup> Conference of Latin-American Cinema, Bordeaux, France

17<sup>th</sup> South American Film Encounters, Marseille, France

14<sup>th</sup> International Documentary Film Festival “Santiago Álvarez in Memoriam,” Santiago de Cuba, Cuba – Santiago Alvarez Grand Prize, Best Direction, Best Photography, Winner of the EICTV Award, Winner of the Frank País Garcia University of Pedagogical Sciences Award

The Film Festival of Women MARIALIONZA, San Felipe, Venezuela – Winner of the Feminist Gaze Award

2015 Festival of Cinema Latin American Studies Association (LASA), San Juan, Puerto Rico

2015 The Workers Unite Film Festival, New York, NY

2015 Mia Film Festival (Mostra Internacional da Amazônia), Manaus, Brazil

16<sup>th</sup> The International Human Rights Film Festival (FICDH), Buenos Aires, Argentina – Grand Prize Documentary Competition, Award for Emerging Directors, World Catholic Association Communication Jury Award

7<sup>th</sup> LiberCine International Festival of Sexual and Gender Diversity, Buenos Aires, Argentina – Grand Prize “Prospectives of Gender”

11<sup>th</sup> The Latin American Film festival of Finland, Helsinki, Finland

4<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Film Festival of Asturias, Spain

## SYNOPSIS

**Women of the Mine (Mujeres de la mina)** provides an intimate portrait of three women that live and work at the mines of Cerro Rico in Potosi, Bolivia. At an elevation of over 13,000 feet, Potosi is one of the highest cities in the world. Nearby stands the Cerro Rico de Potosí mine, the world's largest silver deposit. The mine is the symbol of colonial plunder. The population worked and suffered while unimaginable riches were extracted. The mines have existed since the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Known as "the mountain that eats men," historians believe that up to 8 million miners died in Cerro Rico since its beginning. The average life expectancy of the miners is 40 years.

In this society, it is the women whose lives are the most cursed, precarious and tenacious. Most are widows struggling to support their families. Women are not permitted in the mines, the males believe they bring bad luck, so they work outside the mines, hammering the rock on the side of the mountain.

Women of the Mine profiles three remarkable women and tells us their stories of struggle, resistance and courage.

- Domitila Chungara – World famous labor leader and feminist, Domitila led the struggle of miners and women in Bolivia.
- Lucía Armijo – worker, miner, leader and single mother of six children, Lucia shows us the mines and tells us about her life in the Cerro Rico.
- Francisca Gonzalez – Miner and the granddaughter, daughter and widow of miners, Francisca supports her family by hammering stone by stone in her struggle to change the future of her grandchildren.

Eduardo Galeano, the acclaimed Uruguayan writer adds more insight as he explains in his eminent poetic style the daily life that these women face.



## DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

In 2006 Loreley traveled to Bolivia to attend the first presidential inauguration of Evo Morales. Before her return home to Buenos Aires, Loreley spent a few days in Potosi where she took a tour of the Cerro Rico mines. During her visit, she met the woman that inspired this documentary, Francisca Gonzalez.

As they walked through the muddy gray trails of the mountain, Francisca, her hands dirty with ore, took small coca leaves from her pocket into her mouth. She told Loreley that it would be good to make a documentary about the women of mines.

Malena and Loreley are collaborators and close friends whose connection is very strong. They do not need words to understand each other. They are like sisters. Lore told Malena that they should make the documentary together.

The years spent making the film were intense. There were births, deaths and life. They lived with the mineworkers and shared the joy of the births of dozens of children and the deaths of fathers, husbands and sons to the mines. The years made Malena and Loreley stronger, and they grew closer to the women of the mines.

"We traveled to Potosí several times. During those trips we shared the lives of these women. We met Lucia at a funeral. She was on one side looking into our eyes with her huge smile. She invited us to her house on the top of the hill. Over hot coffee, we learned about the stigma, prejudice, cooperation, empathy, sadness, rejection, hugs, carnivals, koas and chayas that are on the mountain.

Eduardo Galeano, from Montevideo, and Domitilla Chungara, from Cochabamba, honored us with being part of our project. Domitilla, already old, was a legend. She surprised us with her endless energy to fight. Shortly after our interview, she died of lung disease – the “stigma of mine.” We feel very lucky to be able to share with you our work.

Over these last eight years, Loreley and Malena have grown and learned from the making of this film. The journey transformed them. Their documentary **Women of the Mine** is now finished. The film begins its own journey."

## DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Malena Bystrowicz** and **Loreley Unamuno** were born in Buenos Argentina in 1978 and 1980 respectively. They met in 1998 when they were studying at the Art Institute Film of Avellaneda (IDAC). Since then they have shared interests, projects and an intense friendship. Both made their way into photography and documentary film.

Malena is a photographer and a documentary filmmaker. She has directed the following documentaries:

**Pickers (Piqueteras)** 2002

**Holes in the Roof (Agujeros en el Techo)** 2007

Loreley has a degree in Audiovisual Arts Education from the National University of San Martín (UNSAM). She then graduated from the National School of Experimentation and Filmmaking (ENERC) with a specialty in Cinematography. Loreley has worked on several short and feature national films as the director of photography. **Women of the Mine** is Loreley's feature documentary directing debut.



## **PRODUCTION CREDITS**

Directed by:

Malena Bystrowicz & Loreley Unamuno

Screenplay, Camera, Photography and Editing by:

Loreley Unamuno & Malena Bystrowicz

Production Crew:

Loreley Unamuno & Malena Bystrowicz

Production Crew in Bolivia :

Agustin Lopez

Nicolás Marín Martínez

Manuel Estrada

Sound :

Agustin Lopez

Manuel Estrada

Natalia Martínez

Post production sound:

Nicolás Marín Martínez

Post production Image:

Nicolas Ghio

Music:

Entrevero Dúo

Graphic design:

Juan Pablo Fernández