

SISTERS OF THE TREES



A FILM BY
CAMILA MENÉNDEZ & LUCAS PEÑAFORT

86 mins / Color / 2019 / Marawi, English, English Subtitles / India, Argentina



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FILM FESTIVALS & AWARDS

Best International Feature Film – Green Film Festival of Barichara, Colombia

Women Fighting Award – Fusagasuga International Film Festival, Colombia

Special Jury Award – International Documentary Film Festival of Mexico City

Best Cinematography – International Documentary Film Festival Buenos Aires,

Best Post Production – Women and Cinema Film Festival, Argentina

SUNCINE International Environmental Film Festival (FICMA), Spain

Melgaço International Documentary Film Festival (MDOC), Portugal

The Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival, China

SYNOPSIS

Among the arid lands of Rajasthan, India surrounded by marble mines, there is an oasis: a small town called Piplantri, where women are no longer afraid of giving birth to a girl. Since 2005, families that previously got rid of their daughters for not being able to pay the dowry, today celebrate by planting 111 trees every time a girl is born. This program has turned Piplantri into an oasis. There is improved literacy, work opportunities and now the women organize. "Sisters of the Trees" reveals the lives of the women and the positive changes that the community is making.

Piplantri Model – Saving Girls, Water and Trees.

Mr. Shyam Sunder Paliwal convinced members of his community to plant 111 trees in celebration of the birth of each girl. The family of the newborn girl signs a document committing to take care of her, provide her with education, and not marry her until she reaches the legal age. Additionally, a deposit is made in her name, which she can access when she becomes an adult. The girl is free to use the money as she wishes, whether to get married or continue her studies.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When one works in cinema, they find "good stories to tell" everywhere. Bringing visibility to social issues is at least one of the possibilities that we, as documentary filmmakers, consider. However, it is not necessary to travel far to do so. The reality around us, just outside our homes, offers a variety of stories that are easily accessible for us as locals to see and understand. But then come the questions: Will showing certain facts in a documentary be enough to change someone's opinion? In what way can documentary filmmaking be transformative?

When we heard the story of Piplantri, a small village in the northwest of India where the entire community has changed centuries of thinking to create a common good, we had no choice. We had to tell the world that even in the most pressing context, values, efforts, and collective tasks can produce clear and substantial results. Adult women, who were historically confined to the domestic sphere and deprived of the possibility of having their own income, can now support themselves and help others in the same process. Without this project, many of the girls would not be with us today. Now, we see them hanging backpacks to go to school.

Filming in another culture requires constant learning, not only in terms of finding the images that allow the story to progress, but also in the most elementary acts of life: eating, sleeping, giving thanks, etc. When we travel, things that we all do are questioned, opening a new sensitivity that can shed some truth in the image. We were strongly motivated to develop a formal system that is respectful of the people we portray. We had the opportunity to access their intimate worlds, often breaking the language barrier and cultural differences, as we worked with observational and direct cinema. We filmed with a small team so that we had greater flexibility to portray a greater sense of reality. We believe in the language of cinema to serve as a tool to motivate the work with the audience. We want to generate reflection and sensitivity towards a topic that seems local, but which contains universal values regarding women's empowerment and care for the environment.

Camila Menéndez & Lucas Peñafort

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Camila Menéndez

Camila Menéndez graduated in 2009, in Mendoza, Argentina from the film director program at The Film and Video Regional School of Cuyo (ERCCyV). She continued her studies in Buenos Aires with Professor Miguel Perez (La república perdida I y II) in his "Film Editing and Dramatic Structure Course." Since 2010, Camila has worked as a freelance editor for several production companies and TV channels such as Baraka Cine, Pandito Films, Shango Films, Channel 7 of Mendoza, Obol, Acequia TV, Señal U. She edited the feature films "Veronica's Videla Passion" (Panorama selectio Cinelatino Festival of Toulouse), "Misty Eyes" by Cristián Pellegrini, "Necronomicón" by Marcelo Schapces and the 5 documentaries "Madam Baterflai" and "Con nombre de flor" by Carina Sama. For television, Camila edited five programs for open digital TV, the documentary "Bowen, History of a Country" (winner of the contest "30 years of democracy" of the National Public TV Channel), and the documentary series "Mediápolis" by Paula de Luque and "Conversations in the labyrinth" for Canal Encuentro. She has also directed the documentary short films "Biofertilizers" (2013), "Vol I: Antonio" (2016), and "Vol II: Lavalle" (2017). She attended the 12th edition of the Buenos Aires Talent Campus, in 2017.

Lucas Peñafort

I was Born in Mendoza in 1980, worked as curator and audiovisual artist since 2009. I obtained the Diploma in Creative Documentary Studies, at the Film Observatory in Barcelona. I Graduate in Cinematography at Universidad del Cine in Buenos Aires. I worked as sound designer, editor and producer in the documentaries directed by Martín Solá: Closed Box, Hamdan, The Chechen Family, that won, among other international awards, best film award at Madrid Film Festival, Nyon Visions du Reel, and Docs Barcelona.

I participated in the traveling video installation together with Antje Ehmman and Harun Farocki; Workers: "Leaving their Workplace" in more than ten cities. I dictated an ethnographic film workshop to the community leaders of the Maya-Man Kitche people in San Martín Chile Verde (Guatemala). I made more than ten experimental short films between Buenos Aires, Barcelona and Stockholm. At present I collaborate with the LODO platform that focuses on the interdisciplinary dialogue of artists since 2014, working with performance, multi-channel video installations and theater. (fiction series and portal) and social networks near the end of 2017.

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PRODUCTION CREDITS

Written and Directed By – Camila Menéndez & Lucas Peñafort

Producer – Victoria Chales

Associate Producer In India – Roopa Barua

Director of Photography – Camila Menéndez

Production Sound – Lucas Peñafort

Editors – Santiago Esteves & Camila Menéndez

Post Production Sound - Adrián Rodríguez & Gustavo Pomeranec

VFX – Alejandro Ceverino

Color – Patricia Batle