

Luis Miñarro

The Abduction of Europe – A Quick Exploration on How to Make Art House Films in a Community Kidnapped by Financiers

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LUIS MIÑARRO If you like we can start with ten minutes talking about the film *Aita* [*Father*, 2010] by José Maria de Orbe you have already seen before. I will tell you more details. It's a film that could be nice for a discussion, especially whether it's worth or not making films in this way. It cost around €750,000, including all the post-production. One of the points that we're going to discuss later on, is that there are other ways of making arty films with a lower budget considering the possibilities, you know.



With this film, we must take into account that there are no professional actors. We invested a lot of time during the shooting. We shot in three seasons: once in springtime, a second one in autumn and the last one in springtime again. And then all the post-production process I mentioned. So I mean this kind of financing package is getting harder and harder to raise, considering the funds we can apply to and the TV stations who might want to license it. All these things are becoming more difficult to get. We must find another formula for making this kind of film that obviously – is going to be difficult in theatrical. In fact, the film has only been sold to the Netherlands and Spain – two countries.

AUDIENCE But I am very surprised, because I guessed the budget must be at most half of what you said. And I think even that would be a reasonable budget.

MIÑARRO A reasonable budget it was not. That was one of the points of discussion: Will it be possible in the near future to make such a film for the price I mentioned? Maybe not. Maybe it will be much more complicated to do. We're thinking about the firms who are going to buy these kind of films. They advance very little for the rights – around €6,000 or something like that. It's impossible then to finance films like this just thinking about the returns from sales.

One thing I would like to explain to you is that this film is a catharsis as well, because the house in it is the director's own house. So the director has some heritage and this house, had to sell the surrounding land – it's near San Sebastián in the Basque country – in order to pay taxes and so on.

And finally the only thing remaining is the big building, which he's going to pass on to his son. And in some sense I feel that the film has been like a process of "brighten" this house, opening this house, letting this house become known to our collectivity, and making a personal catharsis.

This is one point of view, the one of the director. But it didn't matter for the audience. The audience don't need to know these details. They must judge the film as it is, on their own.

AUDIENCE The house did belong to the director?

MIÑARRO Yes, yes, exactly. It still belongs to him. And he can't do anything with this house because making it into a hotel, for instance, is very expensive. He doesn't have the money to do that. And nobody today is interested in making big hotels outside the big city. It's on the outskirts of San Sebastián. So it's quite complicated. The only possibility is that a public institution takes care of this house. This house needs continuously the resources of the director for its maintenance.

And when he came with this idea we applied for funds, of course. We made a script, which is not the film. Parts of the script are in the film, but we did not strictly follow the script as it was because it was not possible. We built the script more like a drama in order to get the funds from the government. Applying to special projects, experimental projects. We got some funds from there, some funds from Catalan TV, and some funds from the government of Catalonia. The film is spoken in two languages – Basque and Spanish – because the Basque country is bilingual. They speak two languages, and mix and switch languages. But later on, even being in big festivals like in San Sebastián and so on, we didn't succeed at selling the film to Spanish TV or to other broadcasters.

AUDIENCE Why not?

MIÑARRO Well it's for a reduce audience, but of course it's not producing benefits. It's like the financial system, not because it has been in many festivals, we have received so much in screening fees from festivals. Also it has been released on DVD. Adding small quantities at the end, you finance the film three years later. It didn't produce benefits. And always it's a complicated way of saying things because, for instance, the general operating expenses from the office are not included in the film's budget, because we, the producers, are also in advertising, doing tv commercials. And the benefits from commercials pay the infrastructure of the office. So if you want to make films like that, you need another source of income at the same time. And you must transfer the benefits of your company to make such kinds of films. But if you believe that cinema is an art, then it's all worth it. So it's not a waste.

AUDIENCE The film was shot on what, may I ask?

MIÑARRO It was shot on Digital HD. The main film. We had a good DOP. The found footage material is original from the 20 Basque films that we found at the Basque Film Library. Prints were in 35mm acetate. We re-shot it and developed it, then we projected it on walls and filmed it again on HD to get this texture.

AUDIENCE Is that what the main cost was if the house belongs to the director?

MIÑARRO The main cost was the production of this film.

AUDIENCE But the house belongs to the director and the actors are non-professionals. There's only one location-

AUDIENCE And it's cheap.

MIÑARRO There were twelve of us there for many weeks' salaries. Then we had post-production. That was maybe half of the budget. We didn't have any digital effects and things like that. It took a while working with the found footage, so the post-production was a long process.

AUDIENCE Was the 35mm already aged like we see it here, or did you do it?

MIÑARRO No, we aged it. We recreated all the acetate material.

AUDIENCE Oh, I thought you found it like this.

MIÑARRO No. This film should be seen from the center of the theatre because there's a lot of geometry in it. There's a lot of composition in the frame. It was designed to take into account the light, which takes you from one side to another. This took a lot of time and the crew was waiting for the days to be clear or not. That was part of the process.

AUDIENCE It's kind of at the edge of narrative and non-narrative, experimental film. Maybe it's not that surprising that it's not selling.

MIÑARRO The film is like a documentary with the two archaeologists in the prologue. It seems like a documentary in some parts, and at the end is really experimental. Do you have any questions about the film?

AUDIENCE To be honest, I thought you just found everything, and your team filmed it all without adding any lighting. Of course, they waited a little bit for some natural light. But I thought they didn't wait long enough to find the really good light. I'm surprised to hear that everything is reconstructed because I thought they just waited. I saw the geometry, but I didn't think it was so complicated to do. That's why I was so surprised. If you had to age this 35mm film, I can imagine that this is expensive. But I'm really irritated because I looked at it as a documentary, which is, of course, a little bit staged with non-professional actors. But from the approach of a documentary filmmaker, it would be quite a simple, direct approach to just get the spirit of the house, which would never cost so much. The documentary filmmaker basically takes what he has.

MIÑARRO No, this is all manipulated from the very beginning, where we had to wait for a specific kind of light. There was little artificial lighting so we had to wait for these moments. The whole process was like this. It was a very peculiar process.

AUDIENCE How much money did you get from funding and how much was your own part?

MIÑARRO We got around 50 percent from state funding. TV was around 20 percent, and the rest was our own investment that we're recouping little by little. In my case as a producer, I own the film but I didn't get a salary. We included it in the budget to make the budget bigger, but I never got anything. That's the only way to make a film like this.

The reviews were very good. It won, of course, the best cinematography award at San Sebastian and Best Film in Mexico. There are two other similar directors in Spain. One is Víctor Erice. Another one is called José Luis Guerín. In a different way, they've explored things like that, around memory, time, and how all these work in local history. All the images you see at the end of this film are related, for instance, with the bombing of Guernica during the civil war. There are also healings from different periods, which are real medical documents from doctors and such. There is also a fiction film from the Basque Cinema period included. So, we manipulated all this content. This film

is made with all that.

AUDIENCE I have a question. How much footage did you shoot? How many hours?

MIÑARRO Not so much. About 80 - 100 hours.

AUDIENCE That's a lot.

MIÑARRO Yes. But it's not a lot, if you consider that we spent around 8 months shooting this film. In that sense it's not a lot. But, for instance, I'm surprised that there's a film by Albert Serra that he shot this year about Casanova and Dracula. He spent 300 hours of material because there were two cameras and sometimes three. That's one of the things about video and HD: it costs nothing, but the editor has to deal with all this footage. You can't do that on 35mm. You have to follow a budget for film stock. You can't waste so much film. It's impossible. Sometimes you could do three or four takes, but not eight. This has changed a lot in films, when shooting digitally and it makes things complicated later on in post-production.

Any other questions about this film? If not, we'll move on to some general comments about where we are and what we can do from now. What's the situation in Europe in my opinion, etc.?



I'll tell you something about the title of tonight's talk "The Abduction of Europe." I choose this metaphor, this image, which comes from Picasso. Here you can see a Minotaur or a bull raping Europe as the classical myth in Greece. Well, that's maybe the position we're in, now in Europe in general terms. That's to say we've been kidnapped by financial entities and by banks. We're all talking about the economic crisis, but in fact it's more than an economic crisis. It's an ecological crisis, a political crisis, a crisis of thinking, an educational crisis, etc. So everybody's talking about the economic crisis, but in fact the whole system is in crisis.

In a way it's like saying that the Calvinist North is kidnapping the luminous and enlightened South, that is trying to make another way possible. At this moment, everything is collapsed. This is also happening, in my opinion, with the ways that we've been making movies and the ways we'll be making them in the near future. In a way, we are in a special moment where things are confusing because one system that has been working until now, is collapsing, and it's going to bring us to a new system that we don't exactly know what it is, and how we could manage this system to continue making movies.

First of all, I would like to say I'm more in the line of arty films or independent films than into traditional entertainment films, because I believe we must preserve cinema as an art. It could be entertainment as well, of course, but it can be art. And art is weak and can disappear if we don't make efforts to keep it alive. Why? Until now, the process has been clear for a lot of us. We've been moving more or less in this area. We've made films possible because we can apply to public funding. We used to have some TV acquisition rights. Then the producer should risk a part of this cake and try to recoup in the near future. But these things are changing now because there's now a tendency to invest less funding in this kind of process or even interrupt it. Why? Because I don't think politicians are very proud or supportive of the arts or cultural matters in general terms. When things are going well, they take advantage of that. It's the way the system operates. But when things are not going well, one of the first things to cut is the money allocated to cultural items because in some way they could consider this as a little bit superfluous.

If we take a look at our history, one of the good characteristics of Europe is that we have always tried to support the arts. From the Renaissance to the Popes and the Ministries of Culture, they've all tried to give some money to develop the arts because this is a sign of Europe's identity. We can stress the idea of trying to reach minority audiences and stuff like that. It wasn't a problem with economic resources. But now with the current situation, all these things are going to be cut, and we'll have to do things differently in the future.

Why is this going to interrupt things as they've been? Because there's no chance of making money in cultural things when there are other priorities. It's very well-justified by politicians. There are other priorities like unemployment, health care, helping banks and companies. So that's one of the big reasons why things are already changing.

Another reason is public TV. Public TV understood in a way that it had to support all kinds of views of what cinema should be. But today they're more concerned with following the same policies as the private channels. They're more concerned about audience size, and say if this kind of film isn't going to get as large audience as another one, then they'll just let it disappear. This is a general concern. For instance, in the case of Spain, private TV – according to European Community criteria – should bring five percent of the benefits to cinema. In reality, they give three because the other two percent are promotional items and things like that. They always say they don't want to do that. They're obliged to do it, but they don't want to. As far as they do it, they try to pass on the benefits to their own company. That's why they're pushing more commercial films. That's reality.

Another reality, which is very strange, is that the Ministry of Culture is supporting more the industrialized films than small films. So if you have a big film with a big audience, at the end you can recoup 33 percent of your investment. But you need to do that. You need at least 60,000 viewers for your film in theatres over one year in Spain. That is good for the films which are on another kind of level. For instance, even films which work well commercially, like those by Almodovar and so on, they have the possibility of recouping 33 percent of their investment. That's to say that one film that is doing business internationally can recoup 33 percent of the producer's investment from the Ministry of Culture. It's ridiculous because that should be more the policy of the Ministry of Industry, not the Ministry of Culture. But that's the way the law is. The law is helping the box office, films that perform better than others theatrically. There is now a law that wants to consider how films are going at festivals, too. But until now, the law says that films that produce money and that are doing well theatrically, can receive this complement from the Ministry of Culture.

Then I must say that Spain has been making 140 films per year, which is a lot. It's number three in Europe after France and Germany. Of these 140 films, only twenty percent are exported. The rest

is for internal consumption. They don't even travel to South America, which seems like it would be logical because they have the same language – Spanish. But so many of these films are so particular that they don't travel outside the country. They're not interesting outside Spain, not even in the other Spanish-speaking countries. That's why maybe now there are policies that aim to cut this in half. The result is that in the most recent budget, the amount devoted to movies is going to be reduced by 37 percent. We're now in this situation that we have 37 percent less funding for doing this first public funding chapter. So it's a very delicate situation now for many companies. The TV stations are also not supporting features like the one you saw because they don't get good ratings when they're shown on TV. It must be seen in another context.

Probably the only country that has a more clear concept of what these kinds of movies are for, is France. They know in a very internal way that they're part of their image in the world. It's an industry that needs to be supported. They devote more funds than any other countries. They have better conditions as well because around forty percent of the public go to see French films. In Spain, only seventeen percent of the cinema-goers watch Spanish films. Almost eighty percent go to see North American films. So the gap is enormous. We know France has better rules because when there was the Marshall Plan, they realized that all films released in France help their industry. So it's a very different situation. Except France and probably later on Germany, where you have the different countries and the regional broadcasters who help the film industry a lot as well, the rest of the countries are in the same situation as Spain. Our market is controlled by the North American movies. Also, these North American movies are going to be seen on TV. So we must fight against this. If we want to survive, we must fight against this trend, which is a hegemonic control of the industry, and try to do our own films in the best way that we can.

AUDIENCE Do you have any experience with crowd funding?

MIÑARRO Yes. I'll get to that later on. That's an issue.

Until now, we've had the chance to co-produce with South American countries or Russia or with other countries in the world through these funds we already know, like the Hubert Bals Fund at the Rotterdam Film Festival, the World Cinema Fund from the Berlin Film Festival, Fond Sud in France, even in Spain Ibermedia, which is a fund for co-producing with Latin America. These are similar to Eurimages in a sense that if these films do well at the box office, you must return a part of the investment. But if the film doesn't make the figures, they won't ask you to return the money. So at least you can produce this kind of films. And I think it's been a very sensitive policy, because here in Europe, we've had the possibility to cooperate with other countries and know even the talent in other continents, and bring them to Europe. It's been a good policy.

The thing is: Will this policy continue in the future or will it collapse as well? That's something we don't know yet. But it seems that everything is being cut. At least in Spain, the media fund this year has only half the resources for cooperation with South America. This is bad because it means we've been cooperating on sixty films per year with Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, etc. and this year it will be only thirty. This also cuts in half the possibilities of discovering new talent. This is a bad situation as well. There are films that cost half of what films cost in Europe or even less, and they have the same results as European films. They're circulating at international film festivals and will be sold to some TV stations. They're going to be on DVD or on the Internet. So our subsidies have been useful for everybody, especially if you realize what all these have been generating.

In the case of Spain, or in Catalonia in particular, the money given to the film industry has been one percent of the total year's state budget. But the return has been three percent of the (GDP) gross domestic product. Twice more. But even being a small industry in cooperation with other ones is something that is working. It's not a waste. We are taking into account the benefits of the images,

which are selling the brand of Spain or whatever. Even not counting that, as an industry, this has produced some benefits. It's not a waste. But who knows where this will bring us in the near future?

For instance, I've co-produced with many countries like Thailand, Germany, France and the UK the Apichatpong Weerasethakul film [*Uncle Boonmee - Who Can Recall His Past Lives*]. As you know, co-producing a film is more complicated in the sense that you need to share the discussion about what you're going to do with three or four other partners. It's especially hard if one's in Argentina, which is a five hour time difference, and one is in Los Angeles, which is even earlier. These are complicated things, but it's a way of making films because it's a collaboration of four or five partners, and every one of us could bring some money from our own country. For instance, in the Apichatpong case, it was the World Cinema Fund, it was the Fond Sud Cinéma, it was some money from gallerists through the UK and the Catalan TV, in my case. And with all these, it was possible to make this film.

Later on, the film became a great success. It pushed the director forward. Since the Palme d'Or in Cannes [in 2010], he's now at a higher level. This is maybe leading him to other kinds of things. We don't know yet. But the results have not been very interesting in money terms. Of course, we've received some money back because the film has been sold to thirty-five territories. But what has the circulation of this film been like? In my country, it had only 13,000 viewers in theatres. In France, it was ten times more – 130,000. I don't know about Germany. Even winning the Palme d'Or in Cannes didn't mean anything in terms of income. That will open all the doors for you, but don't expect to receive money from a film, even if you've won the Palme d'Or in Cannes. The only country where the producer maybe benefits from such a prize is in France because France has a better system. As I mentioned, the film has been seen by 130,000 viewers there. Then it's maybe been bought by three TV stations like Arte, etc.

Finally, it's good for the film if you co-produce with France because you will have a better spread in the world. But later on, it's good for the specific producer to own his own territory. Usually when you make a co-production between four or five countries, every co-producer keeps his own territory.

AUDIENCE That was exactly my question. So the French made a lot of money with a film which you basically had to produce?

MIÑARRO Maybe. They're the only ones who get money with an arty film. But even so, it helped the film.

AUDIENCE Couldn't you make a contract where they have to share a little bit?

MIÑARRO The French co-producer would not accept such a deal. He knows he's in a privileged position because the French people go to the cinemas to see films like this. They are in a better position. We have to be clear about that. I have always co-produced with France, even with France being twenty percent. In *The Strange Case of Angelica* by Manoel de Oliveira, France was seventeen percent, Spain was thirty percent, and the rest was Portugal. In Portugal, this film has been seen by 5000 people. It's a country of nine million inhabitants. In Spain, it has been seen by 6000 people, which is a country with 45 million inhabitants. In France, which is a country of about 65 million, it has been seen by 75,000 people. It's always ten times more in France. I know why – because people there walk to the theatres to see movies. Maybe they are more *voyeuristic* (!). I don't know. But this is the reality. They consume all kinds of movies, not just American movies. It's a better situation for any film there.

When you make a contract, you don't know that the film is going to win the Palme d'Or in Cannes, of course. But when you make a contract, one of the considerations is that the French producer is

going to keep 100 percent of his own territory. And he's going to receive a proportion of the income from the rest of the world except the countries of each co-producer. That's how it usually is, especially for films like this. Maybe a big film made by the United States, England and Germany would have other issues and proportions. But with arty films that have budgets ranging from €500,000 - 1.5 million – Apichatpong, Oliveira, etc. – every co-producer keeps his own market. It's good for them because they get more from it.

AUDIENCE I asked because I'm from Switzerland, and if we would try to co-produce with Germany and Germany had, let's say, only twenty percent of the financing and I had eighty, then the German co-producer would naturally think he could have all the income from Germany, which has ten times more people than Switzerland. So without doing a lot of work, if the film is good of course, he automatically has the potential to earn a lot of money and we don't. I think we should make better contracts.

MIÑARRO Well if you can do that, congratulations. But this is the way it is. Anyway, you're talking about a Swiss-German co-production, not one with France?

AUDIENCE Right.

MIÑARRO Well at least you can share the rest of the world. You can have maybe eighty percent of France. That's good for you as a co-producer. But if France were already included, then you would be lost. [laughter] That's the way it is. Maybe you can manage to make a different kind of contract, but that's not the general rule of the market.

One other problem with films like this is that you have a sales agent. And this sales agent sells the film to different distributors around the world. And then the returns are peanuts because there are a lot of expenses. Today you must pass through this control. And there are a lot of middlemen between the producer and the consumer of a film. This is the way the industry is. Your sales agent has an office in Cannes for selling your film. The expenses of sending the materials to Singapore and Hong Kong and so on makes a big bill, and finally you see nothing. But the French co-producer does because he receives the money for his own territory, not for international sales. In France, these films perform better. For instance, we made a film called *Medianeras (Sidewalls)*. It's a first film, which is an Argentinian, Spanish, German co-production. This film has performed very well in France, Brazil, and maybe now in Argentina. But in Germany they haven't found a distributor. So it's also a problem of founding distributors and exhibitors.

In Paris, for instance, you could find a film produced by me with Albert Serra, a small film called *Birdsong (El cant dels ocells)*. In Barcelona it was in theatres for two weeks and in Madrid for one week, because it was spoken in Catalan, and Madrid didn't want to have this kind of film. Only three weeks total. In France, it was distributed by Capricci Films. It was in Paris for six or seven months, but in a different way. For instance, one week was screened on Tuesday. Another week was on Friday. Another week was only in matinees, etc. This happened for six or seven months. So they gave people who wanted to see that film the opportunity to watch it. In our countries, if the film doesn't perform well the first weekend, then it's out.

There are many countries like Spain, where the new films come out on Friday. It's then very hard for these small films to do well because they have to fight against *Tintin*, the new Spielberg film, for instance and other big films by people like Cronenberg. This weekend, people who like cinema are going to watch the new Polanski or Cronenberg film. And people who are going to the cinema with their kids are going to see *Tintin*. So next Monday, when they do the programming for the next week, our film is going to be out. I'm sure. I must take a small theatre because the big theatres are controlled by the North American majors. I can't go there with a small film. I have to choose the

small, independent theatres. My films are going to be only in two cities – Barcelona and Madrid. Forget the rest. They don't even show subtitled films. They show only dubbed films. So it's difficult, very difficult.

I've been producing films since 1995 – seventeen years. I've produced or co-produced twenty-six films that have already been released or are going to be released in the next year. And every time it's more difficult to get good results. This is my experience and what my colleagues have been experiencing as well. Every day is more difficult. Maybe because there are many films. Also because everything is being crushed by other films that are more entertaining. Or maybe because the majors have more control over everything.

In Spain, for instance, if a theatre wants to show *Titanic*, it buys a package. In this package are *Titanic* and four bad films that should be released. And these other four films are not Spanish but American films. It's a way of controlling the theatres. And these films are crushing the rest because they're released with 180-200 prints, and other films have only five. That's impossible. You can't fight in the same league. You're always going to lose. That's clear. That's why you have to invent other outlets. I'm trying to get my films shown at festivals that films like this would reach, cinemathèques, film clubs, and the Internet in the near future.

Here we come to crowd funding. Crowd funding is a possibility for films like this. If you make a film using crowd funding, it will cost ten times less than films produced the traditional way, and it will perform the same. It will be seen at festivals and on the Internet. In the end, it will have the same performance share in the same channels, and you can do this in a very different way. I think this is one of the possibilities in the near future – crowd funding.

I would like to show you a little piece I produced by two new directors, very young directors, twenty years old. Originally these were clips to be shown on the Internet. These two directors came from a film school with their own friends as actors, and some stage actors from independent theatres. They made the whole film in this way, through crowd funding, and they made it very cheaply but quite well. I'm going to show you just one of the clips. It's a film without a beginning and ending, but it's a film that's going to festivals as well because they have ideas. That's the good thing: they have ideas.

This is very easy to establish. [Shows film clip of *Amanecidos (Dawned)*]



This film was made with crowd funding, with friends. They put it on the Internet. It was kind of a cooperative. All the friends could get a copy of the DVD or get a ticket for the premiere. Then we're going to distribute the film through a pay-per-view company in Spain. So it's an issue. This film didn't cost much. Why? Because we have a new technology that makes this possible – the Canon 5D and 7D cameras. And then we don't need all these special state funds and stuff, where you lose two years. If you make a film the normal way, you have to first send the script to the Ministry of Culture to get funds. Then you have to try to sell the film to TV. You have to follow these steps. Sometimes you lose the spontaneity. What I've seen in directors like these, is that they are very

fresh. They're coming straight out of school and need to make their films right away and not wait for years.

That is, in my opinion, one of the possibilities in the near future. Maybe it will be easier once the people get used to being a part of this system. But, of course, this is not comfortable for the traditional industry because the industry is established in a different way with different parameters. This is a little bit strange, for instance, for the Spanish Producers Association because they prefer to use the big machinery to do big business through the films by known directors who help new directors do their own work.

So if you're interested, I can show you some examples of films I've co-produced in the traditional way, not with crowd funding. I can explain how we made them. We have time to watch four. We're going to see the trailers, which are in Spanish, so you might not understand so much. But they're the commercial trailers for Spain. We can see the images. Maybe you know some of these films.

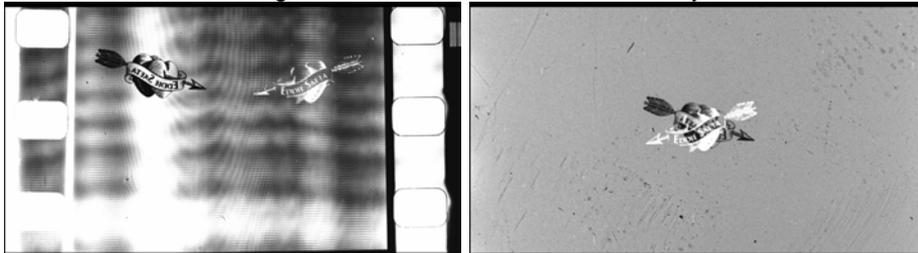
AUDIENCE Has the film that you showed us been sold to pay-per-view?

MIÑARRO Not yet because this is going to start on pay-per-view later. Now there's a distributor interested in showing it in Barcelona. So in three years, this kind of films will be shown theatrically in Barcelona at the same time that it will be available on pay-per-view. For us, this is a very new experience.

AUDIENCE What is the name of the film?

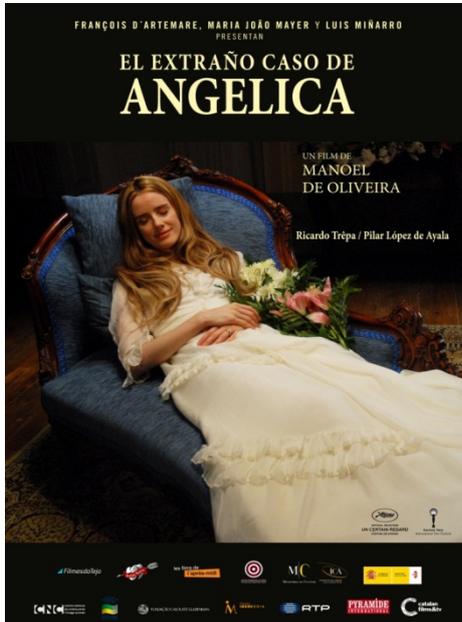
MIÑARRO Spanish title *Amenecidos* and English title *Dawned*. I have a copy, but it's 70 minutes long. The directors are now preparing a new project.

This is our animated logo, the header. It has been made by Peter Tscherkassky from Austria.



MIÑARRO We can see the four trailers together, then we can discuss them.

MIÑARRO So these are four very different films. It's possible to learn in very different ways. The first is *The Strange Case of Angelica*. It's by Manoel de Oliveira. He's a very old director, 103 years old. He's been working constantly for the past sixty years. He makes a new film every 1 ½ years. He's constantly looking for possible producers. Until five years ago, he was in the hands of Paulo Branco – a very big producer in Portugal and France. I don't know why, but they went separate ways, so now he's always looking for new producers.



I met his French co-producer in Venice one year. He told me about this project. I was very interested in participating in it because he wrote this script *The Strange Case of Angelica* in 1952. It was a script of a film that was never made. It was even published in *Cahiers du Cinéma*. But they couldn't make the film because the Institute of Cinema in Portugal didn't approve it at the time. So he kept it in his desk drawer.

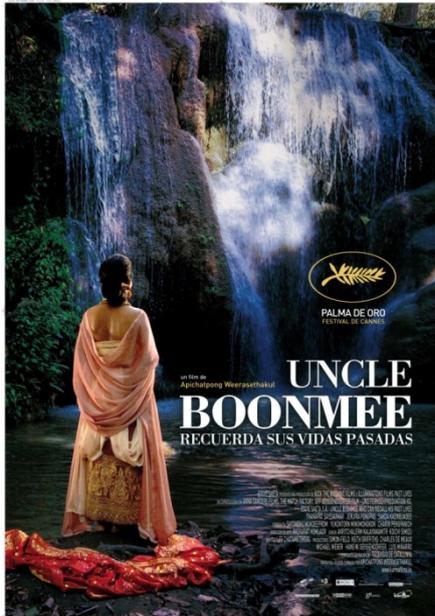
Finally they gave us the script. It was a very traditional, very well-written script. It was based on a story that happened to him in the 1950s. He was visiting a cousin, whose young daughter died. And she asked him to take a picture of the dead person. Then, when the camera took the photo, it went out of focus, and it seemed that this person came to life. And he started to have a "relationship" with someone who died – a phantom. From this point of departure, the film begins.

We got the traditional funds. We applied to Eurimages. We applied to Ibermedia because Portugal and Spain are in this programme. We applied to TV stations without much success, except Portuguese TV. Not in France, not in Spain. Then we received enough resources to make the film in a traditional way as 80 percent of the films are made in Europe. That's a common standard of how to produce a film that has a possibility to be done because there's a director with a big personality attached to it.

Then Oliveira didn't want to be in competition in a festival because he's 103 years old. It was the opening film of *Un Certain Regard* in Cannes, and was very well received. It has been circulating at film festivals in many countries, and been shown at markets. There was a way of recouping investment. No problem.

The second film, *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, as I've said before, is a film that was not easy to produce. Cinephiles knew Apichatpong [Weerasethakul] through his famous works like *Tropical Malady* and *Syndromes and a Century*. Apichatpong had a project consisting of installations in several museums. That's another issue today – how artists are participating in movies or how movie directors are participating in art and in museums. But he has a project called *Primitive*, consisting of several installations with big screens that has been seen at the Foundation

for Art and Creative Technology in Liverpool, and in Munich, Paris, Chicago, Tokyo, and in other countries. It's big screens with projections of slides and things like that.



Apichatpong made a short film called *Letter to Uncle Boonmee*. I watched this film as part of the *Primitive* process. I heard a previous echo of the things he did before. That was easy to get some funds from these artistic institutions through the British producer. It was a way of getting some funds through France from Charles de Meaux. He's a film producer, but he is also related to art galleries.

So little by little, that was the way of doing this film. Then he won the Palme d'Or. It's something that can reach you once, but you never know. It's like the lottery, in a way.

And then the third film was *Aita*. We've already talked about it. I produced it 100% by myself. I explained to you the long process. Also the knowledge that this is not going to be easy to produce in the future – such a great expense for such a kind of film.

Then the last one, *La mosquitera* [*The Mosquito Net*], is a more industrial film, based on a very well-written script which was much easier to get TV funding for. Why was it much easier? First of all, it had a cast of actors who are very well known in Spain, like Emma Suárez, Eduard Fernández. These are actors who perform in many Spanish films. So that gives confidence to the TV stations. They want to buy safety, security. And if the film has a good script, which in this case was between comedy and tragedy, and there are known actors, and the director is supported by a known producer, then it's easy to get the funding to make a film like that.



Later on the film performed well. It won at Karlovy Vary and at seventeen more film festivals. But it was very complicated to sell it abroad. An Argentinian sales agent has sold it to France, which has released it, to Spain, of course, and that's it. It was a film with more sales potential. If you want, I can explain to you why. When the film was in Karlovy Vary, we didn't yet have a sales agent. The only distributor we had was in Spain. The film won a prize, and then a couple of North American companies were interested in buying this film. Then when we tried to reach an agreement three or four months later, they gave me a long list of deliveries – internegatives, film prints, errors and omissions insurance, etc. – that I would have had to invest another € 80,000 that I didn't have at that moment. I couldn't do it. It was impossible for me. I didn't have such an amount of money just to provide materials to a North American distributor. My concern was that if they handled the film, once they had recouped their expenses, maybe I wouldn't see any coin. My company is small. We have three employees. It's not a big corporation so I couldn't do that. It was impossible. So I said no. And six months after the prize in Karlovy Vary, the film was considered old in the marketplace. So there was no way. I couldn't find anyone who was interested in selling this film. You have to do everything within one year of your festival premiere. After this year, your film is old and there are many other films waiting on the list. So that's one of the pressures we have as producers. If you don't manage to make distribution contracts before the film makes its festival premiere, then later on it's too late and you've lost the opportunity. It's as simple as that.

This film has done well enough in Spain, and we've recouped our investment following exactly this process – public funding. Later on, once the film has been released, 33 percent of the cost goes back to the producer. This is the law until now. So I asked for a loan on the meantime. Both big public channels bought the film – the Spanish station and Catalan TV. Then I was able to recoup my investment, which was the 33 percent loan from the Ministry of Culture. So that's the traditional way of making a film. But even this model is being questioned. You can't be 100 percent certain that the TV stations will buy your film, even if the script is good and you've got well-known actors. So you don't have too many possibilities, especially in our case because it was the director's third film. He's not Almodovar, Amenábar, or Álex de la Iglesia. He's not a big name in the industry.

Are there any questions about what you've seen up to now in these trailers? Is there anything you'd

like to explore? If not, we can see four more clips and discuss them. As you like?

AUDIENCE But what are the new possibilities?

MIÑARRO Crowd funding is one. It makes films much less expensive. And co-produce.

AUDIENCE Like how? How do you make them much less expensive?

MIÑARRO By working with new directors, for example, people who are not asking you for a large fee or whatever, who are prepared to shoot in different ways, like making a film in two weeks rather than five weeks. By using a reduced crew and friends. As far as technology is developing, I think it's like with photography. I remember when I was a kid, photography was only for professionals. Good photography. Only works done by professional people. Other people didn't know how to compose or light shots. Now every one of us, could make good photos because we know how to do it. We know how to compose and light shots, etc. Technology has allowed us to simplify things.

I think in the future, everyone will be able to make their own films if they like, and put them on the Internet or send them to their families or whatever. People have grown up with this, and they have the sensibility to do it.

AUDIENCE I also have a question regarding technical aspects because with the change from 35mm to digital formats, first it was like, oh, we have the possibility to make films for really cheap because digital cameras were very inexpensive. But I have the impression that now with the development of digital cameras and equipment, there are really great cameras that are almost like 35mm, but they're very, very expensive. So my question is: Is the technical development such that production is more expensive again?

MIÑARRO No, I don't think so. You can make a film in many different ways. A couple of years ago, you had to do a process like blowing up to 35mm and so on. That would be an expense. Even doing P & A [prints and advertising] for the film would be another expense that maybe you weren't prepared for. Sometimes it cost more than the film itself. But today you have other issues. You can go to other channels and other things. If you have a small, fragile film, maybe someone will be interested in releasing it theatrically, and you can do this on BluRay or Betacam or whatever. This is much cheaper than buying the 35mm material and having it developed at a lab. It really depends on what kind of film you want to make. If you make a film like that – a personal film or a film by a new director – and you want to do digital effects and stuff like that, it's very expensive.

AUDIENCE But perhaps it would attract a lot of people.

MIÑARRO Sure, but you need a lot of money to do it, is not my case. And you need to have the taste for that. That's not my way. You can do it.

AUDIENCE I just mentioned this because two days ago we had someone here who encouraged us to choose this way. He also talked about how everything is changing in a very enthusiastic way.

MIÑARRO But you know, I don't think they made a film that was any better or worse than any other film. It could have been more spectacular. But when you see a film by Rossellini or Dreyer, they're very simple films but they're part of film history. Or Fassbinder. They were making films for little money. That was something important in film history as well. It really depends on what your goal is. If your goal is to make money, maybe TV could help you. But it's not 100 percent certain that TV will help you. With such films, at least you have a possibility to finance them – at least up until now. These films are not disappearing. They are seen anew at cinemathèques, retrospectives. They're

not like commercials, where you use them then throw them away. This is my point of view. You need so much energy to make a film. It's so difficult to make a film, at least put your energy into something that you trust, that you think is interesting for you, and that helps you get to know another world. If not, it's better that you do something else because the returns are never clear. From the 140 films we produce in Spain every year, only eight or ten films do well financially. Only ten. That's less than ten percent. Thirty percent of these 140 films are by first-time filmmakers. Many never get a premiere. The easiest way, even though it's difficult, is to make a first film because usually in Europe first and second films are protected in the sense that you can send your project to the Ministry of Culture, and you used to have a lot of possibilities of getting funding. But if your first or second films don't do anything on the business side or in terms of prestige – at festivals and so on – then you're not going to make the third one because you probably won't get funding for it.

AUDIENCE I don't understand your message actually. So you're saying that the only chance to make arty films in the future is to make them cheaper and not pay anyone or use first-time directors? Then you're saying that if a first-time director fails, then they won't make a second film. So that would mean for me that everybody's got to make one film and then become a waiter.
[audience laughter]

MIÑARRO Yeah, but this is happening. This is reality. I'm sorry, but this is reality. Many people are making their first or second films ...

AUDIENCE Actually, I don't think this is a problem at all. The problem is what kind of film do we want to produce. As a producer, I don't think I should say it's hard to survive. Perhaps I can survive on the young ones.

MIÑARRO No.

AUDIENCE What we're learning here is that you need a good script. We're dedicating this week to this. And our passion and everything has to go into this script. Your track record proves – or at least suggests – that you are exactly the same. But your speech here is a little bit depressing. So we don't get your message.

MIÑARRO Well, to be honest, advertising has given me the resources to do films. I'm proud of what I'm doing. I like the films I've participated in making. So I'm not depressed about that. But what I'm seeing now is a completely different scenario. We need to re-invent ourselves and the process because this process is beginning to collapse. This is what I'm trying to say. One possible way of doing things is crowd funding. Another way of producing is trying to help new directors. But maybe I'm not in the correct place because I'm not very fixated on scripts. When I choose a project, I don't choose a project because of the script. Of course the script is important, but for me it's not 100 percent of the project. I prefer to know the director, what's on his mind, what kind of thing does he want to do. I want to see his enthusiasm and how he's going to do this film. That's more important to me than the script itself. But that's my personal point of view. That's why I'm saying that maybe I'm in the wrong place, because I know that you are focusing on scripts. But, for example, Albert Serra would not exist because of his script.

The first time I met Albert Serra, he was working on a film about *Don Quixote* [*Quixotic/Honor de Cavalleria*, 2006]. It was about the dead times between the adventures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, so it was the opposite of what we've seen up to now. It was not the script that convinced me. The only way was to trust in what he was going to do, and see the originality of it, because no one had done this before. So we made that film with very little money. Then Albert Serra is known among cinephiles and at festivals and so on. He's a character himself. This was more important to

me than his script about the dead lapses between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

His next film was *El cant dels ocells* [*Birdsong*], 2008. The original idea was that three wise kings are lost in the desert, and they don't know if they're looking for the baby Jesus or Halley's Comet. The script was only four lines, but it was an interesting film. The only way to make this film was with little money and trust in the director. I reduced the size of the crew, and tried to shoot in 2-3 weeks instead of 2-3 months. That's a lesson I've learned. I believe in this. I'm not trying to be depressing. I'm trying to give you the idea that there are several different ways of making films, not only the way we've been used to making them in Europe for the past twenty years. We were in a privileged situation which is now disappearing. If this privileged situation returns, everyone will take advantage of it. But what happens if it's really over? We must re-invent ourselves. We must try to develop all kinds of new possibilities if we want to continue making films.

AUDIENCE I think that's why most of the people are here in the room, because everybody's looking for a new model in the face of what we already know. Crowd sourcing and the Internet and all that – we know about these things. We know they've been around for a while now. The fallacy is that people point at examples – look at this film, look at that film, that worked, that was out there – but for every one of these films, we don't see the 10,000 films that are made and never seen by anybody. In my country, there's a small producer who made a film five years ago called *Once* for € 100,000. And it went on to make \$ 30 million around the world. It's just a little film, but they made it. It's probably been released in most countries in Europe. But that was five years ago. And now all the producers in Ireland and the Irish Film Board are saying: "Well why don't you make another *Once*?" Just make a film like *Once*. Make *Twice* or *Three Times*. It's a joke. The producer says it's called *Once* for a reason.

What I'm saying is it's kind of a fluke each time. You can point to people who win the lottery, and say okay, there's like a thousand people who have won the lottery. When you're looking for a model, you just have to do it any bloody way that you can.

MIÑARRO There are no models.

AUDIENCE If you have a film and you're bloody minded enough and stubborn enough and desperate enough maybe to get one film done. Then after that film, if you're not completely psychologically and financially destroyed from the experience, and have enough energy to do a second film, then that's great. But there aren't a lot.

MIÑARRO I know.

AUDIENCE What's happening now is similar to in publishing. The death of literary publishing is all this self-published stuff out there. Some of it gets to the headlines and they get book deals, and they end up being actual books. There's all this talk about a whole new model of publishing. It's the same thing with film. It's not a new model really; it's just a model at the moment. But what we see emerging is the same kinds of players, who have publishing houses basically, like Channel 4 in the UK. You have people who represent the money, but on a different platform. I think the same structures will emerge on different platforms.

MIÑARRO Of course.

AUDIENCE And at the moment, we're just sort of running around, trying to figure out how those deals are actually going to be structured. But I think they'll be the same kinds of deals.

MIÑARRO Yes, but one of the differences maybe today is that the industry is not closed in itself in

SOURCES 2

SCREENWRITING | DEVELOPMENT
NETWORKING | TRAINING

the sense that you're making a film, and it will be released theatrically, and that's all. You can make a film, and this film can be released theatrically. But it can also be on the Internet. It can be in a museum, for instance. There are different ways. We must look at our priorities and think about which line we can follow. But this can be difficult, of course. It requires more of your time. You must be smarter about taking advantage of the channels you can use. It's more work for the producer, but it's a way to go because today everything is interdisciplinary. It's becoming like this. Of course, every country has its own particularities. For instance, I was recently in Argentina, and I was impressed by the fact that half of the new directors are women. This isn't happening anywhere else. Fifty percent of the new directors coming from the schools and doing things are women. That hasn't happened in any other countries. So every country has its own particularities, which depends on the schools, what the people are looking for. They're making eighty films per year in Argentina, which is not bad. It's a big thing in itself. It's much more difficult to get funding there than in Europe. But I'm not trying to depress you.

Thank you very much for your time and your participation.

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