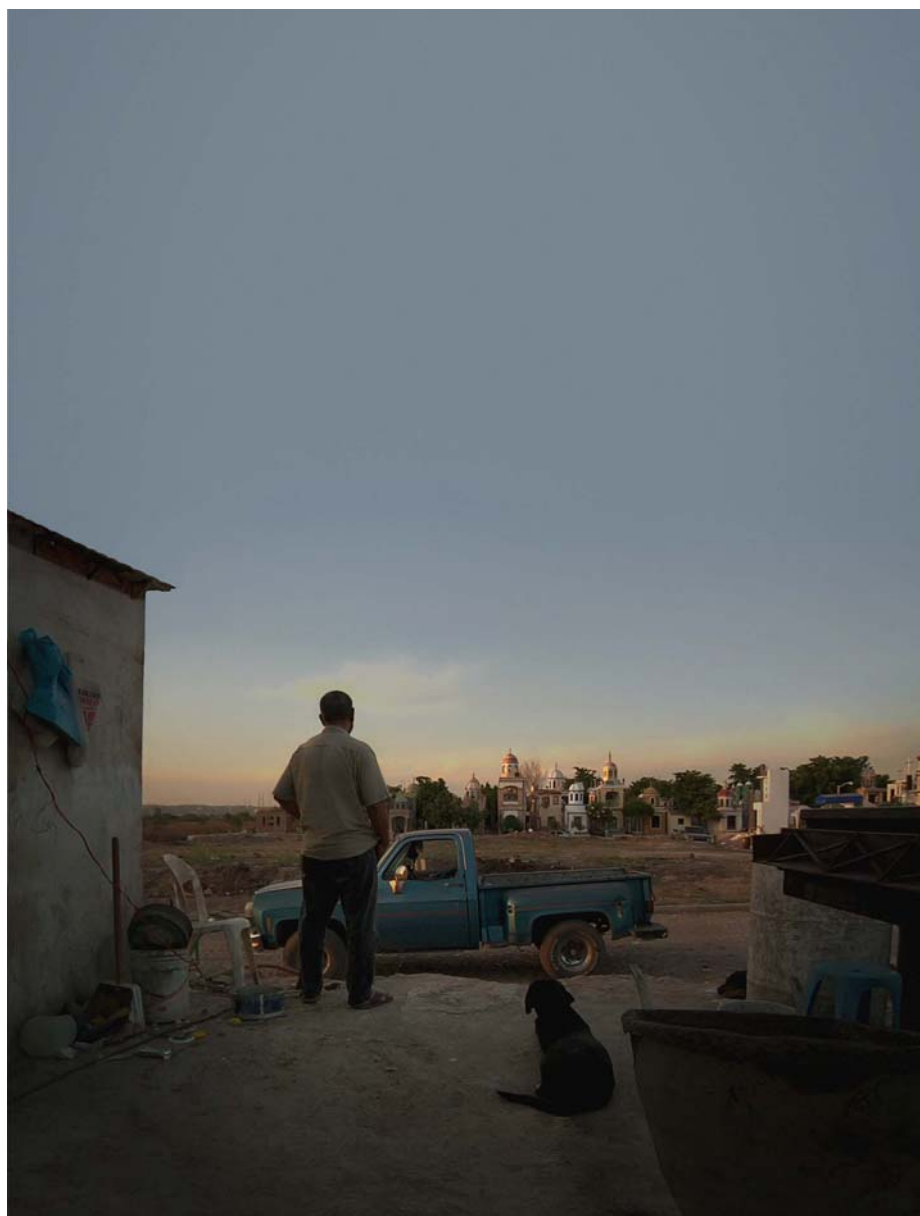


NATALIA ALMADA

El velador (2011)



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1. Currículum



Natalia Almada (México, 1974), graduada en Bellas Artes y fotografía por la Escuela de Diseño de Rhode Island (Estados Unidos). En 2009 recibió el premio a la mejor dirección documental en el Sundance Film Festival por su película *El general*. Su trabajo más reciente, *El velador*, se estrenó en la sección New Directors/New Films de la pasada edición del Festival de Cannes. Entre sus filmes anteriores destacan: *All Water Has a Perfect Memory*, un corto experimental que recibió el reconocimiento internacional, y *Al otro lado*, su laureado debut, un documental sobre la inmigración, el tráfico de drogas y los corridos. El trabajo de Almada se ha proyectado, entre otros, en Documenta 13, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Guggenheim Museum de Nueva York y en la bienal de Whitney. Sus tres documentales hasta la fecha se han emitido en la conocida serie Point-of-View Documentary Films (POV). Actualmente reside en México.

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OTRAS ACTIVIDADES LABORALES

2012 Asesora de artistas, Creative Capital, EUA
2012 Jurado del Consejo Nacional de Cine, Colombia
2012 Jurado para otorgamiento de becas, USA Artists, EUA
2011 Jurado para otorgamiento de becas, Creative Capital, EUA
2011 Cinema Eye Heterodox Awards
2011 Ponente en TedX, San Miguel de Allende094393443, México
2010 Jurado de la Selección de Cine Nacional, Films From the South, Israel
2007 53rd Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, *South of the Other*, EUA

Conferencias en Universidades de Estados Unidos como Artista Invitada

2012 San Francisco Art Institute, Clase Magistral de 2 semanas
Vanderbilt University
CalArts, Clase Magistral de 1 semana
Claremont McKenna

2011 Haverford University
School of Visual Arts
New York University

2010 Hunter College
School of Visual Arts
University of Arizona

2009 Rhode Island School of Design
Vanderbilt University

2008 Wellesley College

Editora de películas

2010 "God Willing", Dirección: Vangie Griego
2006 "Revolución: Cinco Miradas", Dirección: Nicole Cattell
2006 "La Lupe: Queen of Latin Soul", Co-Editora, Dirección: Ela Troyano

EDUCACIÓN

2008-2009 Whitney Independent Study Program, Nueva York, EUA
1999-2001 MFA en Fotografía, Rhode Island School of Design, EUA
1995-1997 BFA en Bellas Artes, College of Santa Fe
1993-1995 Tuft University, Boston

2. Influencias

Artículo disponible en: <http://www.elojoquepiensa.net/06/index.php/lorem-ipsium/el-velador-entrevista-a-natalia-almada/itemlist/user/62-salvadorvelazco>

El velador: Entrevista a Natalia Almada

Escrito por: Salvador Velazco



Bilingüe y bicultural, con estancias entre México y Nueva York, la cineasta Natalia Almada (México, 1974) ha realizado a la fecha cuatro filmes que han tenido un amplio reconocimiento. Con **La memoria perfecta del agua**, su primer trabajo sobre la remembranza familiar de una hermana que murió en trágicas circunstancias, ganó el premio al mejor cortometraje documental en el festival Tribeca de New York en el año 2002. Su primer largometraje en donde trabaja el tema de la inmigración a los Estados Unidos, el narcotráfico y los corridos, **Al otro lado** (2005), fue seleccionado para exhibirse en la prestigiosa Whitney Biennial. Por su tercer documental, **El general** (2009), en torno a la figura de su bisabuelo, Plutarco Elías Calles (1877-1945), Almada se hizo acreedora al Sundance Documentary Directing Award. Su más reciente filme, **El velador** (México/USA, 2011), una coproducción entre Altamura Films y American Documentary POV en asociación con Latino Public Broadcasting (LPB), fue elegido para presentarse en la Quincena de Realizadores en el Festival de Cannes.

Para realizar **El velador**, Natalia Almada regresó al lugar donde creció y de donde es su familia, Sinaloa, estado de la República mexicana que tiene el distintivo de ser la cuna de los grandes capos del narco como es el caso de Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán o los hermanos Beltrán Leyva, por citar dos ejemplos. Almada seleccionó el cementerio Jardines de Humaya como el escenario de su documental. En este panteón, el más importante de Culiacán, sicarios y capos comparten tumbas con empresarios, ganaderos, políticos y ex gobernadores. El cementerio se distingue por grandes mausoleos: imponentes espacios arquitectónicos erigidos en memoria de quienes se suele comúnmente deducir fueron narcotraficantes por la riqueza que se ve reflejada en los suntuosos detalles de sus capillas. Y desde aquí Almada se propone hacer una meditación sobre la violencia que azota al país generada por la guerra que el gobierno le ha declarado a los cárteles del narcotráfico. Natalia Almada concibe el documental como una forma de representación en donde hay una reivindicación plena de la subjetividad y del muy personal punto de vista del cineasta. En **El velador** se presenta una historia que no se desarrolla bajo los resortes habituales de la dramaturgia aristotélica sino, más bien, como en los poemas, se va tejiendo un crescendo de emociones y significados que tiene imágenes y sonidos como soportes primordiales.

Natalia Almada vino a los Claremont Colleges (en el área de Los Ángeles, California) a presentar **El velador** en el mes de marzo. Así tuve la oportunidad de realizar esta entrevista que pongo a consideración de los lectores de *elojoquepiensa*. **El velador** se exhibirá en televisión el 27 de septiembre a través del canal de POV en

Estados Unidos; en la ciudad de México, en el foro de la Cineteca, se presentó a partir del 11 de mayo de 2012.



Directora Natalia Almada

Salvador Velazco: *¿Cómo se origina la idea de **El velador** con la perspectiva de hablar de la violencia sin mostrar la violencia?*

Natalia Almada: Bueno, primero tenemos todo un lenguaje que se ha desarrollado en los medios masivos de comunicación en torno a la violencia generada principalmente por la lucha contra los cárteles de las drogas en el país. Se muestran los torturados, los cuerpos descuartizados, los cuerpos sin cabeza, en la televisión, en las revistas, en los periódicos. Se muestra la violencia de una forma tan gráfica y tan sensacionalista que no podemos digerirla. ¿Cómo vas a reaccionar frente a eso en tu vida cotidiana? Entonces siento que en lo que han aumentado las muertes y la violencia estas imágenes no nos están ayudando a entender lo que pasa. La forma en que los medios masivos de comunicación tratan el tema de la violencia hace que el narco o el delincuente, como le quieras poner, en la mayoría de los casos, se vuelva un tipo de monstruo. Porque sólo un monstruo es capaz de cometer esos actos. Y al ser un monstruo ya no es un individuo que merece tener sus derechos, que es un ciudadano, una persona que tiene familia. Es una forma de deshumanizar al delincuente. Y esto provoca un distanciamiento contigo: ese narco o delincuente es una persona mala por equis razón. Y yo como ciudadano nada tengo que ver con esa persona, no tengo culpa o responsabilidad alguna. Siento que ese tratamiento de la violencia en los medios nos ha hecho mucho daño. A mí me parecía importante tratar de buscar una forma diferente de hablar de la violencia; incluso, no como un trabajo analítico sino como un trabajo que te abriera un espacio emocional para meditar en qué es la violencia, por qué existe y cómo todos podemos ser responsables por ella. Es decir, participantes de alguna manera en las condiciones sociales que llevan a la violencia. Por ello, decidí hacer la película sin mostrar esas imágenes.



SV: *Además de la mirada a las consecuencias de la violencia del narcotráfico, hay también elementos de orden cultural que se podrían comentar a propósito de **El velador**. Por ejemplo, ¿qué tanto sabemos sobre el culto*

de los señores del narco en México? ¿Qué aprendiste de este tema haciendo este documental en el cementerio Jardines de Humaya en Culiacán, Sinaloa?

NA: Mira, te puedo decir que las personas que apoyaron la película aquí en los Estados Unidos me preguntaban si yo iba a filmar una versión del Día de los Muertos. Pero no. La versión clásica de Octavio Paz de que el mexicano ama y celebra la muerte no es lo que está sucediendo con los muertos relacionados al narcotráfico que hoy en día ya suman más de 60,000. Aquí estamos en presencia de un panteón en donde la mayoría de los muertos tienen menos de treinta años. Y la fiesta que se le hace al joven difunto --casi siempre por sus amigos-- es indicativa de que la muerte se ha convertido en un rito de pasaje. Como si fuera una fiesta de quinceañera que obviamente no lo es. Los que están en ese mundo tienen que aceptar la muerte de una forma completamente diferente. Aceptar que van a morir jóvenes. Y entonces dicen, yo le voy a hacer la fiesta a mi cuate que se me adelantó porque es muy probable que yo sea el siguiente. Y yo también quiero que me hagan mi fiesta. Así este panteón en Culiacán es un lugar con mucha vida en ese sentido: la gente hace todo tipo de fiestas ahí (hasta bautizos). Pero insisto: no es la típica fiesta del Día de Muertos por el hecho que los difuntos son tan jóvenes y vivieron en un mundo muy duro e incierto.



SV: *Desde tu perspectiva, ¿cómo podríamos leer estos mausoleos? ¿Qué te dicen a ti estos narco-sepulcros que son realmente grandiosos?*

NA: Para mí la forma de entender los mausoleos es ver el reverso. Los desaparecidos, las fosas comunes o sea las muertes que no se identifican son muy trágicas y casi siempre vistas como una forma de injusticia por la falta de un acto mortuario, un rito de sepultura, que les dé un sentido de finalidad. Y estos mausoleos quieren ser, precisamente, lo opuesto. Es como decir: “yo existí, yo conté, yo fui alguien y aquí me pueden recordar o dar homenaje.” Lo más probable es que muchos de los enterrados en estos mausoleos vinieran de orígenes muy humildes, muchos de ellos campesinos, de la sierra, con poca escuela, que llegan a tener mucho poder económico y pueden mandarse hacer esas grandes sepulturas -en ese sentido es un gran logro-. Yo veo estos monumentos como algo muy humano porque las personas quieren ser recordadas. Y ese es el lugar para que la abuela, la mamá, el hermano, la novia, en fin, los integrantes de la familia, vayan a estar con sus muertos. Y lo más trágico es que son vidas que se cortan muy pronto, son personas que mueren muy jóvenes, pero ahí está el lugar para recordarlos. Y el mausoleo es el símbolo que dice: “esta vida valió algo”.

SV: *Llama la atención la profusión de cúpulas en los sepulcros del cementerio Jardines de Humaya en Culiacán. Y yo, siendo de la ciudad de Guadalajara, no pude evitar pensar en las cúpulas que proliferan en el paisaje urbano de la Perla tapatía. Ignacio Corona, un jalisciense que es profesor en la Ohio State University, ha estudiado este elemento de un estilo arquitectónico que él denomina como “neomexicano”. Según Corona, estas cúpulas podrían ser reminiscencias de las antiguas haciendas y también una expresión de resistencia frente a la “americanización” de Guadalajara.*

NA: La verdad es que no hice un estudio de la arquitectura de los mausoleos del cementerio. Una de las cúpulas de una de las tumbas, según me comentó la viuda del difunto, estaba basada en la fotografía de una mezquita en Estambul. Entiendo que el “minimalismo” no existe en el panteón, pero varias viudas me decían: “Yo voy a mandar hacer una capilla minimalista” y esto era como la idea del buen gusto, del progreso, de la modernidad. No sé lo suficiente para decir esto con certeza pero las cúpulas en Guadalajara me imagino que se veían en las haciendas tequileras. En el norte de México, en Sinaloa, no teníamos este tipo de haciendas. No sé si el modelo sea el mismo. Por el otro lado, Culiacán es una ciudad que en muchos sentidos se siente “gringa” al igual que Guadalajara o Monterrey. En los últimos años se han construido centros comerciales enormes parecidos a los *shopping malls* de Estados Unidos que son muy buenos para refugiarse del intenso calor de los veranos por el aire acondicionado. Pero, como te digo, a mí lo que más me interesaba era considerar las razones por las cuales un mausoleo de este tipo se convertía en un lugar de remembranza, en algo importante y grandioso. Y ver la construcción de estas capillas es realmente un proceso fascinante por la imaginación e ingenuidad que se requieren para realizarlas.



SV: ¿Cómo surgió la idea del tratamiento creativo de *El velador*?

NA: Cuando estaba editando estaba pensando mucho en la música. Aunque se usa mucho hoy en día decir: “Documentary is a form of storytelling” (que el documental narra historias), yo no comparto totalmente esa idea porque no creo que sea la única forma de hacer cine o cine de no-ficción. Lo que me inspiró mucho fue la música de jazz improvisada. Lo que entendí viendo improvisar a músicos como Marc Ribot era que pasaban estos momentos como de mucho caos, de no entender bien lo que pasa (o por lo menos yo no entendía), de ir de un sonido casi “desagradable” a una melodía, o a algo que te daba como un respiro y justo por eso

disfrutabas lo anterior. Yo no soy músico, pero esto lo sentí como un juego entre *tension and release* (tensión y relajación). Por un lado, creas una situación de mucha tensión, estresante, difícil, desagradable, por lo cual el alivio o respiro que llega se vuelve muy placentero. Es justo el juego entre esas dos partes que hace que sea una experiencia dinámica y excitante. O sea que la “narrativa” no está en el *plot* sino en el “ritmo”. Y lo que se buscaba en la película por ser tan minimalista en cierta forma era ver cómo llevar al espectador a los sentimientos y las emociones sin necesariamente tener que contar una historia o narrativa. Porque en *El velador* nada pasa. Sí, tienes --podrías decir-- instantes de líneas narrativas como la construcción de los sepulcros, los actos cotidianos de Martín y la viuda, algunos funerales, un momento culminante o clímax cuando tenemos a la madre que llora a su hijo, pero, en realidad, no hay un *plot* en el documental.

SV: *Todo un reto hacer un filme en el que casi nada ocurre...*

NA: Sin duda alguna, para mí fue un reto muy importante tratar de hacer una película con un mínimo de recursos formales (sin música incidental, sin narración, sin cambios de lugar, sin diálogos). El restringirme a una esquina del panteón me obligó a fijarme en los gestos y en los detalles. Cuando nada pasa, el viento se vuelve un evento. Cuando ya viste lo evidente es entonces que te empiezas a fijar en los detalles. Se convierte en otro tipo de lenguaje cinematográfico que no depende de la palabra o del desarrollo de una narrativa. En ese sentido puede ser que también se aproxime un poco más a la fotografía – salvo por supuesto la gran diferencia del tiempo y el movimiento-. Por otro parte está el sonido. Mi colaborador más cercano es Alejandro de Icaza, que ha hecho el diseño sonoro de mis últimas dos películas. Desde la filmación Alejandro se involucra en el proceso viendo los *rushes* (las pruebas). Aunque es una película sin diálogos, es una película con una propuesta sonora muy pensada. A través del sonido tratamos de crear el ambiente, lograr que el espectador se sienta sumergido en el lugar. El sonido también le da ritmo a la película rompiendo la monotonía con la resonancia fuerte de la lluvia, por ejemplo, o el zumbido de los bichos en la noche. También a través del sonido logramos romper la pantalla. O sea que el sonido te da una realidad que se sale de la pantalla, que rompe el encuadre para recordarte que hay un *outside the frame* o *beyond the frame* (un fuera de campo).



SV: *Es muy notorio el predominio de tomas o planos fijos en **El velador**.*

NA: Bueno, creo que tiene sentido haber optado por tomas fijas porque, por un lado, el cementerio es un lugar donde la vida se detiene y esto se refleja en una toma fija. Por el otro lado, era algo que tenía que ver con la situación de filmar en ese cementerio. El asistente que iba conmigo, más que ser una persona de cine, era alguien que me acompañaba por cuestiones de seguridad no sólo por la situación delicada del lugar pero también por mi condición de mujer. Además, haciendo sonido y cámara yo misma, no tenía mucho caso proponerme hacer un *gran travelling* o un *tracking shot* que desde luego no iba a salir bien. Es como trabajar dentro del contexto y con los recursos disponibles en lugar de tratar de hacer Hollywood. No me podía mover mucho, tenía que trabajar rápido, tenía que poder guardar mi equipo rápido si por algo había que irse del lugar; todo esto, desde luego, era una buena razón para inclinarse por las tomas fijas. El contexto en que haces un documental afecta la manera en que filmas. Pero en lugar de ser una limitación, esta improvisación con la

realidad es algo muy enriquecedor para el proceso creativo. Te fuerza a pensar, a retarte, y a empujar tus propios límites. Quizá así sienten los alpinistas cuando se enfrentan a una nueva montaña... ¿no?



SV: *¿Qué nos podrías decir acerca de la propuesta visual del filme?*

NA: La luz en Sinaloa se me hace increíble, pero es una luz muy difícil: al mediodía es una luz muy fuerte. Por eso, aproveché mucho la luz de la mañana y de la tarde. Lo cual también le daba sentido a *El velador* porque Martín llegaba con la puesta del sol y se iba con el amanecer. La luz marca el tiempo. Sí, ves varios días con sus amaneceres y puestas de sol, pero la idea es que no tengas una cronología precisa, que no sepas si pasó una semana, un mes o un año. Yo busqué esa ambigüedad del tiempo – donde el tiempo es a la vez el instante preciso y el tiempo indefinido, infinito-. Por otra parte, la fotografía tenía que estar muy bien trabajada en este documental en donde no hay diálogos y muy poca música. Las cámaras de hoy en día nos dan una gran calidad de imagen a un precio bastante accesible y con una tecnología también bastante accesible. Pero yo siempre insisto que no es la cámara lo que cuenta sino el ojo del fotógrafo. El porqué se hace un cierto encuadre, o tal movimiento de cámara, o cómo se maneja la luz, no sólo es para lograr mostrar el contenido sino para provocar una cierta sensación. Para mí el gran reto es encontrar un lenguaje cinematográfico, en gran parte visual, que logre transmitir a mi manera lo que veo, lo que siento, lo que quiero decir.



SV: *En una entrevista que le concediste a la documentalista Lourdes Portillo, mencionaste que en el cementerio Jardines de Humaya hay un código de silencio en el que, por ejemplo, no se puede pronunciar la palabra “narco”. De ahí que este código del silencio te haya forzado a contar la historia a través de los gestos de los actores sociales (en realidad hay contadísimas expresiones verbales a lo largo del documental). Incluso es notoria la ausencia de música extradiegética (la poca que escuchamos viene del mundo narrado).*

NA: El código del silencio tiene que ver con el hecho de que no puedes llegar a ese cementerio haciéndole preguntas a la gente sobre quien está enterrado en esta o aquella capilla, sobre cuánto les costó el mausoleo,

o si el difunto era o no un matón. Preguntas de este tipo simplemente no se hacen porque al hacerlas pones en peligro a la persona a quien le estás preguntando, a ti mismo, a todos los que están contigo. En ese sentido, hay un código de silencio. Además, este silencio tiene que ver con la idea de respetar el panteón que es un lugar de luto. Y eso se respeta con el silencio. Por otro lado, en el cine documental se suele favorecer la palabra hablada (por eso mismo se usa mucho la entrevista) para transmitir la información, lo cual pensamos que nos va dar un entendimiento de la realidad. Alguien te va contar su historia, te va a decir esto pienso, esto me pasó, es el testimonio verbal que se favorece casi siempre. En el caso de *El velador* la palabra no funcionaba. Y es por eso que el gesto se vuelve la palabra de la película, la forma en que entendemos lo que piensan los actores sociales, lo que sienten, lo que les sucede. Un ejemplo de esto es ver cómo mueve las manos Martín, el velador, para hacernos saber sus emociones.



SV: *¿Este código del silencio fue también un factor para que hayas decidido usar el cine directo para realizar el documental? En otras palabras, para que hayas decidido usar la modalidad de cine observacional (según la famosa clasificación de Bill Nichols) en donde el/la documentalista sólo es una “mosca en la pared” (a fly on the wall) que se limita a ver el mundo histórico que se despliega frente a su cámara.*

NA: Este tipo de cine directo, del “fly on the wall”, es un cine que he estudiado, que aprecio mucho, pero que no se relaciona exactamente con mi proceso. Yo siento que mi presencia sí afecta la situación, que mi presencia sí cambia la realidad que estoy filmando. Trato siempre de poner momentos que yo llamo de transparencia en los cuales le recuerdas al espectador que hay alguien atrás de la cámara, que ese alguien está enmarcando la situación, que hay una interpretación subjetiva de la realidad. No es la realidad como fue sino como yo la vi y como yo te la quiero contar. Yo cuando estoy realizando un trabajo siempre tengo la cámara conmigo así esté rodando o no y eso ayuda a que la gente esté más cómoda. No tuve escenas actuadas, pero podía predecir de alguna manera lo que iban a hacer los sujetos que aparecen en el documental después de haber estado filmando en el cementerio por un espacio de un año. Y de esa manera era fácil anticipar la acción. Había una cierta complicidad entre el sujeto, la cámara y yo. El velador todos los días regaba el mismo espacio, la viuda llegaba todos los días a limpiar el sepulcro, a poner flores. Y eso me permitía un día poner la cámara en tal o cual posición para filmarlos de diferentes ángulos. Era algo parecido a hacer ficción en el sentido que podía planear mis tomas. Pero, sin duda, mi presencia sí afectaba la situación. Por ejemplo, en la escena en que los albañiles se están cambiando de ropa, pues, había algo de coqueteo. Parte de lo reservado que era Martín, el velador, tenía que ver muy probablemente con mi condición de mujer. En la relación con Mercedes, la viuda, hay mucha complicidad (aunque es algo difícil de explicar). No platicamos mucho, no me contó todo, pero en el momento de filmar ella se convertía en mi cómplice. No es la confianza de amigos sino otro tipo de confianza con otro fin. Hay como un diálogo que sucede a través del lente. Pero, volviendo a lo del cine directo, para mí es muy importante hacer consciente al espectador de que hay alguien detrás de la cámara. Esto también es para mí una defensa del tipo de cine documental que yo

hago y que no es aquel que pretende ser objetivo y saberlo todo. También definiendo esto desde mi punto de vista como mujer. Yo estoy segura que un hombre no lograría las mismas imágenes que yo logré no solo porque se fijaría en otras cosas quizás, pero la gente se relacionaría con él y su cámara de otra manera.

SV: *¿Cuál es la función de los noticieros de televisión que cada noche ve Martín, el velador?*

NA: Es para dar una idea del contexto de la violencia que se está viviendo en México; desde luego, no puedes dar todo el contexto de un conflicto que todavía estamos viviendo y del que, por ejemplo, todavía no podríamos dar con precisión la cantidad de muertos. Lo que me interesaba era limitarme a una esquina del panteón y crear una situación un poco claustrofóbica, que no salieras de ese lugar. Pero que ese lugar adquiriera lógica y sentido por lo que sabes que está pasando afuera. Lo que te dan los noticieros es una idea de lo que está sucediendo afuera. Puedes ir como sumando los datos, los números de muertos que van en ascenso, la noticia de los señores de la droga que van cayendo, los jóvenes asesinados... en fin, es nuestra realidad. Pero la tranquilidad que se percibe en el panteón, con la luz suave, las flores, las tomas largas, cobra más sentido cuando entiendes que no es la realidad que se vive afuera (de la que aprendemos por los noticieros). Eso te da la sensación de que estás suspendido entre el momento justo después de la violencia (que llevó a la muerte) y justo antes de la violencia (el gran hoyo anticipando los cuerpos).



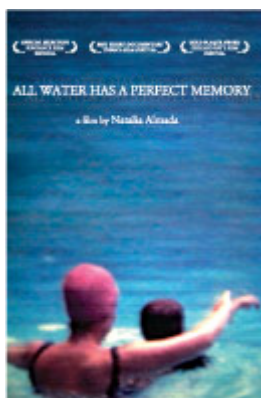
SV: *Para terminar con la entrevista, ¿podrías mencionar otras manifestaciones artísticas sobre la violencia de la lucha antinarco? **El velador**, desde luego, no es un caso aislado.*

NA: Hay varias expresiones artísticas sobre el tema del narcotráfico y la violencia. El año pasado, en el Festival de Cannes, además de **El velador** había un par más de películas mexicanas sobre el tema. Una de éstas era **Miss Bala** de Gerardo Naranjo, que es una propuesta comercial, pero no deja de ser interesante. Tenemos una Teresa Margolles, un Élmer Mendoza (los dos de Culiacán, Sinaloa, por cierto), entre otros artistas plásticos, escritores, cineastas, que a través de sus obras están haciendo una reflexión de la violencia generada por esta guerra contra los cárteles de la drogas. También hay una larga tradición de corridos y “narco-churros”. Me parece muy positivo que a través de estos trabajos se esté dando un diálogo que nos ayude a esclarecer este fenómeno tan complejo. Imagínate más bien ¿qué pensaríamos si tuviéramos 60,000 muertos y nadie hablara del tema?

EL VELADOR. Is a co-production of Altamura Films and American Documentary POV in association with Latino Public Broadcasting (LPB), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). Associate Produced by Les Films D'Ici and Tita Production. Additional funding provided by the Jan Vrijman Fund, The Sundance Institute Documentary Fund, Charles Schultz, NYSCA and Chicken and Egg Pictures, 2011.

3. Filmografía

La memoria perfecta del agua (2001)



Una joya experimental de 19 minutos que compitió en Sundance en 2002 y fue galardonado con el mejor documental corto en el Tribeca Film Festival, y recibió el galardón de la placa de oro en el Chicago International Film Festival de ese año, Almada reconstruyó la muerte de su hermana de dos años, ocurrida cuando ella apenas tenía unos meses, y cómo su padre y su madre afrontaron la tragedia.

Más info: http://www.altamurafilms.com/AllWater_content.html

LA MEMORIA PERFECTA DEL AGUA 2002, DOCUMENTAL, 19 MINUTOS, 16 MM y VIDEO
Dirección / Producción / Edición / Fotografía

Distribución: Women Make Movies

Televisión: Sundance Channel

Presentaciones en Festivales

2002 Festival de Cine de Sundance, EUA

2002 Toronto Latino Film Festival, Canadá

2002 Tribeca Film Festival, Nueva York, EUA

2002 Festival de Cine de Bilbao, España

Presentaciones en Museos, Conferencias, Seminarios

2005 Museo Guggenheim, Nueva York, EUA

2002 Queens Museum of Art, Nueva York, EUA

Premios y Reconocimientos

2002 Mejor Cortometraje Documental, Tribeca Film Festival, EUA

2002 Gold Plaque Award, Festival Internacional de Cine de Chicago, EUA

2002 New York Foundation for the Artist Film Fellowship, EUA

PREMIOS, BECAS Y RESIDENCIAS

2011 Alpert Award, EUA

2010 USA Artist Award, EUA

2009 Residencia Tamaas, Marruecos

2009 IDA, Jacqueline Donnet Emerging Filmmaker Award, EUA

2008 Guggenheim Fellow, EUA

2006-2007 / 2009-2011 MacDowell Artist Colony Fellow, EUA

2000-2001 Premio de Excelencia, Rhode Island School of Design

2000-2001 Beca, Rhode Island School of Design

Al otro lado (2005)



Ver trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5g8yhzW1J4>

Más info: http://www.altamurafilms.com/AlOtroLado_content.html

AL OTRO LADO

2005, DOCUMENTAL, 66 MINUTOS, VIDEO

Dirección / Producción / Edición / Co-Fotografía

Apoyos: Latino Public Broadcasting, Sundance Documental Fund, New York State Council For The Arts Distribución Grant, Arizona Humanities Council, Tribeca All Access Program, National Association of Latino Independent Producers Academy

Distribución: Subcine

Televisión: P.O.V./PBS (EUA), ARTE (Francia), VPRO (Holanda), SBS (Australia), EBS (Corea)

Presentaciones en Festivales

2006 Ambulante: Gira de Documentales, México

2006 Tribeca Film Festival, Nueva York, EUA

2006 Festival Internacional de Cine de Guadalajara, México

2006 Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia, México

Presentaciones en Museos, Conferencias, Seminarios

2008 Whitney Biennial, EUA

2006 Museo de Arte Moderno, Nueva York, EUA, 1 al 6 de marzo

2006 Bellagio Dialogue on Migration, German Marshall Fund y Rockefeller Foundation, Italia

2006 Conferencia INPUT, Suiza

Premios y Reconocimientos

2006 Cultural Voice Award, New York Latino Film Festival, EUA

2006 Nominada a los Gotham Independent Film Awards, EUA

2006 Nominada al Alma Award, EUA

2005 Mención Especial, Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia, México

2005 Mejor Documental, Festival Internacional de San Juan, Puerto Rico

2005 Mejor Largometraje, CineFestival, San Antonio, EUA

2005 Premio Especial del Jurado y Premio por Mejor Edición, Festival CineCeará, Brasil

El General (2009)



Trailer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjabUq0IR_E

Pasado y presente se encuentran cuando la cineasta Natalia Almada recupera unas grabaciones sobre su bisabuelo Plutarco Elías Calles, general revolucionario que llegó a la presidencia de México en 1924. A Calles se le llamó “El Bolchevique”, “El Jefe Máximo”, el “Quema-Curas”; se le recuerda como el dictador que gobernó detrás de todos los presidentes sucesores hasta su exilio en 1936. A partir de las grabaciones de Alicia Calles, EL GENERAL gira entre los recuerdos de una hija que lidia con el retrato histórico de su padre y el peso de su legado sobre el México de hoy. El tiempo se borra en este fascinante y complejo retrato de una familia y un país que viven bajo la sombra del pasado.

Más info: http://www.altamurafilms.com/El_General_PRESS_KIT_ESP.pdf

EL GENERAL

2009, DOCUMENTAL, 83 MINUTOS, 16 MM y HD

Dirección / Producción / Edición / Fotografía

Apoyos: Creative Capital, Sundance Documental Fund, ITVS, Latino Public Broadcasting, New York State Council for the Arts, NALIP Estela Award, Renew Media (Rockefeller), Jerome Foundation, Guggenheim Foundation, MacDowell Colony, Sundance Editing and Composers Lab

Distribución: Women Make Movies (USA), Mantarraya (México), Louise Rosen (Ventas Internacionales)

Televisión: P.O.V./PBS 2010, Canal 11

Presentaciones en Festivales

2010 BAFICI, Argentina

2009 Festival de Cine de Sundance, EUA

2009 Ambulante: Gira de Documentales, México

2009 Festival Internacional de Cine de Göteborg, Suecia

2009 Festival Internacional de Cine de Guadalajara, México

2009 Festival Internacional de Cine de Seattle, EUA

2009 Festival Internacional de Cine de Los Angeles, EUA

2009 Latin Beat, Lincoln Center, Nueva York

2009 Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia, México

2009 DokLeipzig, Alemania

2009 Festival de Cine de Gijón, España

Presentaciones en Museos, Conferencias, Seminarios

2010 Museum of Modern Art, Nueva York
2010 National Gallery of Art, Inglaterra
2010 Walker Arts Center, EUA
2007 Flaherty Seminar, Nueva York, EUA, Retrospectiva

Premios y Reconocimientos

2010 Nominación, Film Independent Spirit Awards, *Truer than Fiction*, EUA
2009 Mejor Director de Documental, Festival de Cine de Sundance, EUA
2009 Premio del Público, Festival de Cine Las Americas, Texas, EUA
2009 Mención Especial, SANFIC, Chile
2009 Premio Coral, Festival Internacional de Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano de La Habana, Cuba
2007 Renew Media Fellow (Rockefeller)
2007 NALIP Estela Award

THE TANGIER 8, THRESHOLD SONG 2009

COLABORACIÓN CON EL POETA PETER GIZZI 2009, 10 MINUTOS, SÚPER 8MM

Presentaciones en Festivales y Museos

2011 Tate Modern Film Series, *Mapping Subjectivity*, Londres, Inglaterra
2010 Rencontres International: París, Madrid, Berlín
2010 Festival Internacional de Cine de Berlín, Foro Expandido, Alemania

El velador (2011)



Documental completo <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbyoG9xAr7g>

Trailer <http://vimeo.com/40687510>

Sinopsis

El velador acompaña a Martín, un velador de cementerio, quien todas las noches vigila los extravagantes mausoleos de los más conocidos narcotraficantes. En el laberinto del narcocementerio, este filme sobre la violencia sin violencia nos recuerda cómo, en el momento más sangriento en México desde la Revolución, la vida continúa y en silencio desafía a la muerte.

Más info.: http://www.altamurafilms.com/el_velador.html

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/El-Velador/228274377183183>

2011, DOCUMENTAL, 72 MINUTOS, HD

Dirección / Producción / Edición / Fotografía

Apoyos: Jan Vrijman Fund, Sundance Documental Fund, POV, Latino Public Broadcasting, New York State Council for the Arts, Chicken and Egg Pictures, Tribeca Adrienne Shelly Foundation Grant, PACA

Distribución: Icarus Films (EUA), Doc and Film (Ventas Internacionales), Cineteca Nacional (México)

Televisión: POV/PBS 2012, NRK 2012

Presentaciones en Festivales

2012 32 Foro Internacional de la Cineteca Nacional, México

2012 Festival Internacional de Cine de Göteborg, Suecia

2012 Ambulante: Gira de Documentales, México

2011 Quincena de los Realizadores, Festival de Cine de Cannes

2011 New Directors / New Films, Museo de Arte Moderno y Lincoln Center, Nueva York

2011 Festival Internacional de Cine Documental (IDFA), Amsterdam, Holanda

2011 Festival Internacional de Cine de Marsella, Francia

2011 Festival Internacional de Cine de Munich, Alemania

2011 Melbourne Film Festival, Australia
2011 Festival Internacional de Cine de Los Angeles, EUA
2011 Silverdocs, EUA
2011 Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia, México
2011 Festival de Cine de Lima, Perú

Presentaciones en Museos, Conferencias, Seminarios

2012 Museo Amparo / Museo de Arte Moderno de Paris, *Resisting the Present*
2012 Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York, 14 al 20 de junio
2012 Documenta13, Kassel, Alemania. Retrospectiva
2012 Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis. Retrospectiva
2012 Wexner, Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio, EUA

Premios

2011 Mención Especial y Premios SICA, Festival de Mar del Plata, Argentina
2011 Mejor Cinematografía, Rencontres Internationales de Documentaire de Montreal, Canadá
2011 Mejor Documental, Bratislava Film Festival, Eslovaquia

4. Prensa y Textos

20 09 2012

Artículo disponible en: <http://www.walkerart.org/magazine/2012/natalia-almada-el-velador-film>

Natalia Almada's Borderlands: Life, Death, and Mexico's Drug War

BY JEREMY MECKLER

Fifty thousand people or more have been [killed in drug-related violence in Mexico](#) since 2006. And while northern Mexico, along the US border, is a focal point of this conflict, its impacts are felt farther south. In her new documentary *El Velador* (*The Night Watchman*), [Natalia Almada](#) focuses on her home state of Sinaloa and the main cemetery in Culiacán, Jardines de Humaya, the final resting place of some of Mexico's most notorious drug traffickers. Amid opulent mausoleums—some air-conditioned, others equipped with sound systems playing fallen cartel members' favorite ballads—overnight caretaker Martín quietly does his work as revelers visit to mourn their dead. The film addresses the violence without depicting it: it has already happened, or it's about to. Straddling a border of her own—she was born to an American mother and a Mexican father—Almada says that while the film is nearly wordless, it has a voice. "Imagine," she says in a new interview with the Walker's Jeremy Meckler, "if we had these 60,000 people killed and had no books or music or movies or art made in response."

Jeremy Meckler

Can you talk about the political moment you're trying to be a part of with *El Velador*?

Natalia Almada

What I wanted to look at was, "What does it really mean to live in a situation of violence?" On the one hand, I wanted the viewer to essentially be in the cemetery and to imagine what it would be like, and for that reason it's a deliberately slow film. The thing about the cemetery that really caught me was that you always feel like you're suspended between these two moments of violence. The violence has just happened, because you have all the deaths, but you also have this feeling that it might happen again. So there's this constant feeling of anticipation.

I wanted the viewer to live in that space, on the one hand, and then I was also interested in making a completely unsensational film that would look at the socioeconomic situation behind the violence. Paying attention to class, here's a construction worker who lays bricks in the hot sun for less than \$20 a day, making a mausoleum that's worth more than his house. It's not hard to understand why he could be tempted to do a little trafficking on the side.

In the film, I deliberately stayed away from the big drug dealers who are buried there rather than looking at who they are and profiling them as a centerpiece of the film.

Meckler

The film reminded me of Roberto Bolaño's book *2666*, which focuses on the same inherent violence present in the drug war but also talks about the serial murder of women that began in Juarez in the early '90s.

Almada

That reference has come up before and I've read part of [Bolaño's] *The Savage Detectives*, but I've never actually read *2666*. I think what happens in Juarez is unique, because you have a convergence of the border, the maquiladoras, the feminicides, and then the drug cartels. So all these things collide and become a kind of violence that goes beyond the drug trafficking thing—it's not any one thing, it's all of it together. Sinaloa is quite

a bit south. It's still northern Mexico, but it's an 18-hour drive from the border so you don't have some of the same dynamics. But historically, it's the place where a lot of the big drug dealers were born, so it's where they are buried.

Meckler

So Sinaloa, in a sense, could be the source of violence that is happening closer to the border.

Almada

Yeah. And the Sinaloa cartel is one of the biggest cartels, so a lot of the drug violence is organized through it.

Meckler

I think what's remarkable about *El Velador* is that you get this very intimate portrait of someone who is not really a part of the drug violence but is impacted by it.

Almada

Yeah, and I think that's what most of the violence is—that's the real violence going on. I was just interviewed by *Huffington Post* and they were so interested in talking about legalizing drugs as the solution, and the cartels, and the war between the Sinaloa cartel and the Zetas. Of course all of that exists, but I think that there is a real human side that gets lost. For me, when I heard that they [found a severed head in the cemetery](#), I thought imagine if you were a worker and that was what you faced as a possibility when you went to work every day. That's a real violence against your human rights. We always focus on all the big dealers and all the money and all the drugs, but there's a whole other side that just gets lost.

Meckler

As a filmmaker, a big section of your work is about this violence. Do you feel like this is the same violence acting on you in your life and work, forcing you to center some of your work on it?

Almada

No. With the violence in Mexico, it seems if we didn't *talk* about the violence, we'd have a bigger problem. Not in terms of creating more violence, but imagine if we had these 60,000 people killed and had no books or music or movies or art made in response. So you look at the work of someone like Teresa Margolles. Her exhibition in Venice was called *What Else Can We Talk About?* She's kind of saying, look, we have to look at what's happening. And I think, when you live in a country and you make work about your country and something like this is happening, it's very hard not to talk about it.

On the other hand, everyone thinks there is censorship in Mexico and there is corrupt government and all these other things, but isn't it great that all these people are actually looking at things critically? Doesn't it speak well, actually of the situation? There is almost a debate going on.

Meckler

Do you see yourself in that niche as a public figure to spark that debate? Obviously you're an artist, too, but do you use your art position to talk about the violence?

Almada

No. I think I'm in the same position as Teresa Margolles, or ... well Bolaño is a much more famous person but, what is *2666*? It's a book about violence. So I don't think that Bolaño or Teresa would think of themselves as activists, but they are making critical work about the reality that they know and live in.

Meckler

In a sense, *El General*, which you brought to the Walker two years ago, is also about the institutional violence that exists in Mexico and your relationship to it on a more personal level. I thought it was both fascinating and courageous to be delving into your own family history and relating it to these more public images of history.

Almada

That whole project came out of the tapes that my grandmother made me—well, made and I took. I have decided she made them for me even though she didn't actually make them for me. So I don't ever think of it as a courageous thing to have made this film, but when you're given something like that and you're a filmmaker, it's a natural thing.

Meckler

So you wouldn't have been able to not make that film in a sense?

Almada

[Laughs] Yes, I guess.

Meckler

So, what is the experimental film scene in Mexico nowadays? Your films sort of manage to not be unobtrusive but to completely duck narrative and documentary conventions.

Almada

I'm struggling a bit to understand all of these definitions myself. I'm not really an experimental filmmaker like, say, Stan Brakhage. We usually think of experimental film as sort of that far end of filmmaking—not having narrative, or barely having narrative, or scratching on film, or doing crazy things with the image, which I don't do. So on some level, I'm not so interested in making conventional TV documentaries, yet my films have all broadcast on [PBS's] *POV*.

What I'm finding more and more in Mexico is that you have commercial cinema and you have more art cinema. And in the art cinema group, where I'd put myself, you have fiction and documentary sort of mixing together. So you have a filmmaker such as Pedro González-Rubio, who did *Todo El Negro* and *Alamar*, who has totally straddled that border of documentary and fiction. So in my work, I feel like *El Velador* is almost a fiction. I'm very interested in making a fiction that's also a documentary. I feel like it's more about the intention and position of the maker than it is about a genre.

Meckler

You're making some bold artistic choices. Can you tell me about your decision to have almost no dialogue in *El Velador*?

Almada

It's two things. It became an artistic choice, in the end, but when I started filming I quickly realized that there's a sort of code of silence. You can't really go around asking people questions about who's buried where and what the different mausoleums are worth. You need to respect this code of silence and not talk directly about the drug trafficking or directly about the violence. When you do, I feel like the answers I would get from people were kind of packaged. They would tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. In that context, gesture and action became much more revealing than dialogue.

Meckler

Yes, and I think a lot of your long close-ups have the result of bringing us a lot closer to the daily activities of your characters.

Almada

What fascinated me was the futility of many of the things they were doing. Like Martín going and watering the dirt in front of that tomb every day, which is a completely futile activity.

Meckler

I wondered about that. Was the intent of that to keep dust down?

Almada

Yes, but it'll keep the dust down for 10 minutes and then it will dry and be just as it was. And for him, he gets a little money for it, so for him that's his motivator. But to me, the violence we're experiencing has that same quality. It just keeps happening and happening and happening, and you can't really see the purpose or the point or the solution. It has that sort of feeling of futility.

Meckler

Can you talk a bit about *Al Otro Lado* and *All Water Has a Perfect Memory*, which we are also screening at the Walker this month?

Almada

All Water was my grad school film that I made at RISD. It's made from audio recordings from my father, mother, and brother about the death of my sister, and that was a more experimental film. Then *Al Otro Lado* looks at immigration and drug trafficking from a main character, a 23-year-old corrido composer from Sinaloa, which is where I'm from—the same region where the cemetery is. So I wanted to look at this kid who knows he won't be able to make a living as a fisherman and is stuck between deciding if he should traffic or he should cross over to the other side. The music, which is this 200-year-old genre of music, is kind of a musical newspaper or troubadour style—the songs are based on reality. So I used the music in place of narration, so they sing songs about crossing the border or taking a shipment to the other side.

Meckler

That's interesting, since I feel like in *El Velador* you're using the ambient sound of the cemetery in the place of narration for a lot of it as well.

Almada

I work with a great sound designer. He's my closest collaborator, Alejandro de Casa, and he did the sound for *El General* and *El Velador*. We talked a lot about that because when the film is so sparse, you really need the sound to create the narrative and rupture. For example, you can have such stillness until the sound of a car door slamming shut wakes you up. You're working much more with a music model of narrative in terms of how to create tension and release or to lull the viewer into a space and then make them react. It's weird because I haven't been able to see it with the nice surround sound yet.

We also did a lot of foleys [everyday sound effects created in post-production], which were done in Argentina. That's because basically I was working alone: I was at the cemetery with this man I've known my whole life who was my bodyguard/tripod carrier/driver, but he's not a film guy. So I was doing all of the sound and image work on my own.

Without the foleys, we would have a hard time getting emotional closeness. In the opening shots, there is a close-up of Martín smoking, but you couldn't hear him. Hearing him inhale his cigarette, or breathe, or hearing his clothes moving make you kind of identify with this character who doesn't speak. And you need that intimacy.

June 13, 2012 Artículo disponible en: http://movies.nytimes.com/2012/06/14/movies/el-velador-the-night-watchman-mexicos-drug-war-cemetery.html?_r=0

Thriving With the Drug-Cartel Dead

‘El Velador’ (‘The Night Watchman’), Mexico’s Drug War Cemetery

Icarus Films

A worker waters ground in front of a mausoleum in “El Velador” (“The Night Watchman”).

By [STEPHEN HOLDEN](#)

When Wallace Stevens wrote, “death is the mother of beauty,” he probably wasn’t imagining anything like “El Velador” (“[The Night Watchman](#)”), [Natalia Almada](#)’s eloquent documentary portrait of a sprawling graveyard in Culiacán, Mexico, in the northwestern state of Sinaloa. The rapidly expanding cemetery has become the burial ground of choice for the country’s slain drug lords.

Its rows of garish, domed mausoleums topped with crosses may be gaudy eyesores. But in [Ms. Almada](#)’s calm, nearly wordless reverie, the cemetery, often shown at twilight, looks beautiful despite the vulgarity of its structures, one of which has a chandelier beneath its dome. Silhouetted in fading pink and blue light, the necropolis skyline stirs up a complicated mixture of awe and despair.

By day the graveyard is a boomtown where workers can hardly keep up with the stream of bodies arriving in fancy cars and hearses. Visitors bring elaborate flower arrangements, wreaths, balloons, marching bands and all manner of bric-a-brac. The cries of grieving survivors are occasionally heard, but their faces are not seen, and Ms. Almada shows no corpses or burial rites.

Because the cemetery is in an arid region, the ground has to be frequently watered. In a remarkable four-minute scene a stationary camera observes the hosing of the ground around a white mausoleum so imposing it suggests a miniature cathedral. The light continually changes, as the sun goes in and out of the clouds.

Not all of the dead are drug lords. One is a policeman who was corrupted by them. Most of the tombs have blown-up photographs of the occupants, many in their teens and 20s. Even as crypts are being dug and the dead buried, life buzzes around the cemetery. During the day children and pets frolic among the tombs that devoted family members methodically clean and polish. The image of an impoverished worker in torn flip-flops, perilously perched on a rickety ladder, speaks volumes about class divisions in a country that threatens to become a narco-state dominated by a wealthy criminal elite.

The most protracted slice of dialogue is the workers’ conversation after the news breaks that the army has executed the cartels’ “boss of bosses.” Shortly after he is buried in the Culiacán cemetery a severed head is deposited outside his tomb.

“[El Velador](#)” is a nonviolent film about violence. The watchman who patrols the area, often flanked by two dogs, listens stoically to the news about the drug war on his tiny black-and-white television set. The United States’ role is briefly touched on in a television interview with a former American official who complains that the amount of money America has devoted to the drug war is paltry compared with the billions spent in Afghanistan. Other news, heard sporadically on car radios, evokes the social breakdown of a nation under siege from within.

At night the racket of construction abates as the workers and the families depart, and an ominous silence descends. The watchman going about his rounds might be described as a silent witness to a national tragedy.

El Velador (The Night Watchman)

Opens on Thursday in Manhattan.

Produced and directed by Natalia Almada; director of photography, Ms. Almada; edited by Ms. Almada and Julien Devaux; released by Icarus Films. At the Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters, Museum of Modern Art. In Spanish, with English subtitles. Running time: 1 hour 12 minutes. This film is not rated.

17 Mayo, 2011 - 11:07

Artículo disponible en: <http://eleconomista.com.mx/entretenimiento/2011/05/17/natalia-almada-filmo-cementerio-narcotraficantes>

Natalia Almada filmó en cementerio de narcotraficantes

Credito:

AFP

Cannes, Francia.-"El Velador", documental de la mexicana Natalia Almada sobre un cementerio de narcotraficantes en Culiacán (Sinaloa) fue presentado el martes en Cannes, pocos días después de que "Miss Bala", de su compatriota Gerardo Naranjo, trajera a esta cita del cine mundial la terrible violencia en México.

Tras "El otro lado" y "El General", Natalia Almada, de 36 años, quien también es ciudadana estadounidense, sigue explorando la historia de su país con esta cinta filmada en el laberinto de un narcocementerio en Culiacán, donde se levantan extravagantes tumbas de algunos de los extintos jefes de los cárteles mexicanos.

El filme, proyectado en una sesión especial de la Quincena de Realizadores, muestra paralela del Festival de Cannes cuya meta es "descubrir filmes de jóvenes autores y saludar las obras de directores reconocidos", sigue a "el velador", Martín, quien noche tras noche cuida el panteón y las tumbas, a todas vistas muy costosas.

A diferencia de "Miss Bala", un largometraje de ficción donde hay tiroteos, sangre y muertos, la cinta de Almada, casi muda, trata de la violencia en México, pero sin ninguna escena de sangre.

Trata, a través de imágenes de las tumbas de los lores de la droga, del fenómeno del narcotráfico y su secuela de víctimas que, según recordó la realizadora, ascienden ya a 40.000 muertos en cuatro años.

La cinta "es una mirada al mundo de la violencia en México, pero de manera indirecta", dijo Almada, ganadora en el Festival de Sundance de 2009 del premio a mejor dirección de documentales por "El General", un retrato del presidente mexicano Plutarco Elías Calles, que fue su bisabuelo, a través de los ojos de su abuela Alicia Calles.

La realizadora rechazó el término de "narcopelículas", que ha sido utilizado en un diario francés para describir los tres filmes mexicanos presentes en Cannes, que tienen como telón de fondo el narcotráfico: "Miss Bala", que fue muy aplaudida, "Días de Gracia", de Everardo Gout, que se exhibe el miércoles, y "El Velador".

"Desde hace décadas hay en México todo un género de 'narcochurros'", hechos con poco dinero, sobre el tema del narcotráfico. Pero en esa época ese fenómeno no tenía la dimensión que tiene ahora, y la población civil no era una víctima como lo es ahora", recalcó la joven documentalista en una entrevista con la AFP en Cannes.

Almada opinó que era interesante la presencia en esta edición del Festival de Cannes de cintas de tres cineastas jóvenes mexicanos que tocan el mismo tema, "aunque los filmes son muy distintos".

"Creo que "Miss Bala y "El Velador" se complementan mucho, porque llaman la atención sobre una sociedad marcada no sólo por el narcotráfico, sino por la desigualdad, la injusticia, donde los jóvenes no encuentran salida", agregó.

"Lo interesante es la creación de un diálogo", agregó la realizadora, que halla "muy natural" que ese tema sea ahora protagonista en la pantalla grande.

"El tema de la violencia permea toda la sociedad mexicana, y es natural y necesario que los cineastas aborden ese tema", dijo la documentalista, que aspira hacer con su cine un "trabajo sobre la memoria y sobre la historia de México, su pasado y su presente".

Esta es su primera participación en Cannes. "El Velador" fue presentada hace unas semanas en el Festival de Nuevos Directores del Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York y en la Film Society de Lincoln Center.

Otros proyectos mexicanos serán presentados en Cannes en un homenaje de la Semana de la Crítica al Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia, mostrando cintas premiadas en 2010 en esa muestra: "Busco empleo", de Francisco Valle, "Ponkina", de Beatriz Herrera, "Carne que recuerda", de Dalia Huerta Cano y "La mina de oro", de Jacques Bonnavent.

La directora del festival de Morelia, Daniela Michel - "una de las grandes promotoras del cine mexicano", en palabras de Natalia Almada - forma parte del jurado de la Cámara Oro, que premia a una ópera prima o segunda obra.

México está también presente en el Mercado del filme, en el stand "Cinema México", donde productores, distribuidores y realizadores de ese país promueven películas como "Cielo abierto" y "Lluvia de luna".

26-03-2011

Artículo disponible en:

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Natalia Almada muestra la otra cara de la "narcoviencia" en un nuevo documental

Por Agencia EFE – 26/03/2011

Nueva York, 26 mar (EFE).- La mexicana Natalia Almada presenta en su nuevo documental "El velador" que estrena en Nueva York, una mirada a las repercusiones del narcotráfico que afecta a su país, para el cual filmó durante un año en un cementerio donde descansan los restos de los protagonistas y víctimas de esa violencia.

La cinta, cuyo estreno mundial será el próximo 27 de marzo en la 40 edición del Festival New Directors/New Films en el Museo de Arte Moderno (MoMa), presenta el contraste entre los humildes trabajadores de ese "narcocementerio" en Sinaloa de lujosos mausoleos y los familiares de las víctimas, a través de los ojos del velador del lugar.

"No hice el documental porque quiera ser una activista" de lo que pasa en México "sino proponer otra mirada", dijo a Efe Almada, quien en 2009 ganó el premio de Mejor Directora de Documental en el Festival Sundance con "El general", en el que presenta de una manera personal la historia de los últimos 100 años de México.

La mexicana acompañó a Martin (el velador) a su lugar de trabajo, desde mediados del 2009 cuando comenzó a filmar, hasta mediados del 2010, así como a los albañiles que construyen las tumbas, que van desde el diseño minimalista del modernismo hasta los extravagantes mausoleos de mármol que parecen catedrales, que pueden llegar a tener varios pisos y costar hasta 100.000 dólares.

"Me gustó mucho la idea de esa persona (Martin), que está ahí cada día, que llega al atardecer y se va al amanecer" del cementerio en Sinaloa, ciudad donde creció Almada y corazón del narcotráfico.

Este retrato de la vida cotidiana en el camposanto permite al público ver la dinámica entre quienes se ganan la vida allí y los familiares que acuden cada día a limpiar las lujosas construcciones para sus seres queridos, quienes a juzgar por las gigantescas fotos, son hombres jóvenes.

El documental de Almada parte precisamente de ese momento después de la violencia, que en este trabajo llega al público sólo a través de noticiarios que escuchan en la radio un vendedor de cocos y el velador, y que cuentan sobre las nuevas víctimas.

Para la cineasta, su trabajo presenta la violencia de una forma diferente a la imagen que aparecen en los medios de comunicación, "muy gráficas y sensacionalistas".

"Cuando leemos de la violencia se nos olvida que (pese a ello) hay gente que lleva una vida cotidiana. En ese contexto me gusta el panteón para analizar la violencia porque es el momento del después", afirmó.

La mexicana, que también realizó "Al otro lado" (2006) sobre la migración, el tráfico de drogas y el corrido musical, sostuvo que no presenta esas historias porque le guste lo que pasa en su país, sino porque "crecí aquí y siento que es importante hablar de eso".

"Las cosas no están mejorando, los medios siguen mostrando que esta violencia sigue", afirmó la sinaloense, cuyo documental precisamente termina con una máquina en el cementerio excavando para construir más tumbas.

Almada, de madre estadounidense y padre mexicano, admitió a Efe que lo más difícil de este proyecto fue filmar en un lugar peligroso y ganarse la confianza de los trabajadores.

"Uno tiene que entender con el tema de la violencia que hay ciertos códigos de silencio, que hay cosas que no se preguntan y muchas que no se dicen, sólo con las imágenes", afirmó Almada, quien recordó que los albañiles y el velador la protegieron durante el año que duró la filmación.

"No es un lugar donde se habla mucho. La gente es muy discreta por lo peligroso que es. Me dejaron filmar porque me veían allí, por la persistencia y el respeto a la gente", agregó la cineasta, a quien luego de año no le permitieron continuar filmando y "entendí el poder que tienen".

Almada, que debutó con "La memoria perfecta del agua" elegido mejor documental corto en el Festival Tribeca de 2002, aseguró además que no tiene temor de mostrar su trabajo "porque está hecho con mucho respeto, no se habla de ningún narco en particular, ni de culpar a nadie".

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http://www.indiewire.com/article/meet_the_2011_nd_nf_filmmakers_el_velador_director_natalia_almada

Meet the 2011 ND/NF Filmmakers: "El Velador" Director Natalia Almada

Natalia Almada's "El Velador." ND/NF.

Through the eyes of the night watchman, we enter into the world of "El Jardin," a cemetery in the drug heartland of Mexico. Since the war on drugs began in 2007, the cemetery has doubled in size and some of its mausoleums have been built to resemble gaudy cathedrals, creating a skyline that looks like a fantastical surrealist city more than a resting place for the deceased. Through her quiet, observational style, Natalia Almada ("The General") introduces us to both the lives of the cemetery workers and the families of the victims; here, the guilty and the innocent, the powerful and the powerless, intersect in the shadow of an increasingly bloody conflict that has claimed nearly 35,000 lives. *El Velador* is a film about violence without violence. [Synopsis courtesy of ND/NF]

[indieWIRE invited directors with films in the 40th edition of New Directors/New Films to submit responses in their own words about their films. To prompt the discussion, indieWIRE asked the filmmakers about what inspired their films, the challenges they faced and other general questions. They were also free to add additional comments related to their projects.]

"El Velador"

Director/Producer/DP: Natalia Almada

Associate Producers: Laurence Ansquer and Charlotte Uzu

Editor: Natalia Almada and Julien Devaux

Sound Designer: Alejandro de Icaza

Production Assistant: Ramiro Rodriguez

Responses courtesy of "El Velador" director Natalia Almada.

Any filmmaking role models?

I had a fantastic video teacher when I was studying photography at RISD.

Drugs and violence as the basis for the film...

I come from a ranching family and spent a lot of time growing up in Sinaloa, which is now Mexico's in Mexico. The dinner table stories about the constant run-ins with the "narcos" that was part of daily life in Sinaloa are countless, and all had a Godfather quality about them. But when the cowboy I'd known my whole life told us his son had disappeared and the remains of his seven buddies were found burned alive, the violence of the drug trade stopped having that Hollywood flare. The ranch caretaker was tortured and beaten so badly he couldn't tell the story of what had happened to him without wetting his pants and so he never told the authorities. Reality no longer felt "like a movie" and I felt the need to make a film.

People often ask me, "Why is there so much violence in Mexico?" "What is the solution to the violence?" I noticed, however, that they usually ask as they get up from the table, not as they sit down. When I am filming, I often think of a Baudelaire quote that I read in Barthes' "Camera Lucida": "The emphatic truth of gesture in the great circumstances of life." If film has any relationship to truth (which I'm not convinced it does), it must lie in its ability to depict gestures. I thought that by filming at the cemetery, I might be able to understand the violence that is pointlessly destroying our country. Over the course of a year filming at the cemetery, I realized that it is not understanding that I seek through the lens, but to rescue the sense of humanity that violence kills. Or, as Serge Daney so beautifully wrote, "To touch with the gaze that distance between myself and where the other exists."

Shooting in a cemetery...

When I began the film, I thought it would be one of three shorts about violence, but I became captivated by the place and fell in love with the idea of the nightwatchman. The more time I spent shooting at the cemetery, the more I understood the meaning of all the details and what they reflect about the violence in Mexico and the social economic situation.

I wanted to make a film that stood in opposition to the sensational depiction of violence that we see in most media. I wanted to make a beautiful, contemplative film that would allow us to look at violence differently by putting us in the middle of it – at the moments when violence has happened and when violence is immanent.

Shooting the film required a lot of patience because of the delicate situation. I just had to wait to see what would happen, asking questions didn't lead to anything interesting and I had to be very careful never to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The cemetery was also a tricky place to shoot because of the light. The sun rises just behind the mausoleums, so in the early morning everything is strongly backlit. Then, throughout most of the day, the sun is so bright and so hot that everything becomes flat and blown out. Late afternoon was my favorite time to shoot, not only because of the light and the Sinaloa sky, but also because it was the moment of transition between the workers and the night watchman and the time of day when the widows would visit. But, this meant that I didn't have many hours of the day to really make the kind of images that I wanted. I also wanted to film the night to capture the life of the night watchman, who was always there just waiting and watching and the ominous and forbidden aspect of the cemetery's nightlife.

The challenges of documentary film...

Working in documentary film, I often feel trapped by the educational, explanatory or activist expectations of the genre. I wasn't really interested in making an educational or activist film about Mexico's drug war. While the socio-economic realities are very interesting to me and the film has a political view point, I want the realities to be inherent to the film's context and not something that turns the film into a portrait. Finding the cinematic language that would allow me this freedom, while working within the boundaries of what we generally consider to be documentary, was very challenging.

Cemeteries vs. mausoleums...

When I went to the cemetery in July 2009, I immediately recalled the paupers' cemetery where I shot part of "Al Otro Lado," a few miles north of the border in Arizona. That cemetery was full of unidentified illegal immigrants who had died crossing the desert. Their "American Dream" came to fruition in a desolate empty lot of dirt, under a brick inscribed with their new American names, Jane and John Doe. The rows of bricks were a site of utter anonymity and oblivion. I understood that the surreal skyline of mausoleums was the antithesis to these bricks, a grand expression of remembrance, a refusal to be invisible, anonymous and forgotten. Yet both are products of the same social inequalities, and the same governmental disregard for the "invisible, dispensable classes." The difference is that those with the ability to pay for mausoleums have made themselves economically indispensable, with a multi-billion dollar industry that makes news through violence, and marks its memory with rich tombs. When I began filming, four massive mausoleums were in mid-construction and a new hole had been excavated for 300 more graves. The continuing growth of the cemetery reflects the continuing failure to end the violence that has already claimed over 35,000 lives.

Any future projects?

We'll see...

2011 Artículo disponible en: <http://bombsite.com/issues/116/articles/5110>

Natalia Almada by [Chris Chang BOMB 116/Summer 2011, FILM](#)



All stills from *El Velador*, 2011. Mexico/USA. Total Running Time: 72 minutes. Courtesy of Altamura Films.

Note to the adventurous globe-trotter: If you happen to be looking for ground zero of the Mexican drug wars, Culiacán, capital of the northern state of Sinaloa, may be just the place for you. (Some 35,000 drug-related deaths have occurred there since 2006 and, as one informed observer puts it, “There aren’t enough living to bury the dead.”)

The leading man of Natalia Almada’s new documentary, *El Velador*, is a night watchman who keeps an eye on a unique and rapidly expanding graveyard in Culiacán. But the star of the film is the cemetery itself. Nowhere on Earth will you see examples of such wildly contradictory architectural situations, e.g., mausoleums, tombs, and crypts that teem with life, vitality, and color—not to mention electricity, heat, and running water. The movie contains very little dialogue, but that just adds to its overall poetry and dramatic strength. As the watchman makes his meditative rounds, the audience slowly learns more and more details of the horror of Mexican “narco-violence.”

Almada structures her film in a perfectly calibrated minimalist manner, and with such hypnotic visual rhythms that the overall effect is one of stoic and spiritual calm—a deliberate counterpoint to the mayhem of the underlying subject matter. (It must be noted that she’s not only the film’s director, but also its director of photography and editor.) It’s unlikely that there will be any solution to the region’s travails any time soon. But if there was ever a film that would make you want to visit a clearly dangerous heart of darkness, this is it. (*El Velador* was selected for the 2011 Cannes Directors’ Fortnight.) I would encourage you to also seek out Almada’s other documentaries, including *The Other Side* and *El General*.

CHRIS CHANG First things first: I want to ask how you are. I understand you’ve had an accident?

NATALIA ALMADA Yes, I was in a car accident on Wednesday [March 30]—on my way to Haverford College in Philly. I have a fractured sternum—not a lot of fun—but it could have been much worse. I just have to rest a lot to let it heal. Thanks for asking.

CC Your film put you in danger in Mexico. And now the United States puts you in the hospital. Some people might see a bit of irony.

NA I suppose it is a bit ironic, especially since it happened the day after the film's premiere, but such is life—chance, fate, *mala suerte*, who knows. The thing about filming in a dangerous place is that you become hyperaware of everything around you, whereas in “safe places” we are careless; we let our guard down. But all said, I was very lucky to have made it out of the cemetery alive (no pun intended) and I owe that to my production assistant Ramiro, who was always watching over me, and to the *albañiles* [bricklayers] and the night watchman who took care of me.

CC Tell me a bit about your background and how you came to this particular subject matter.

NA My family is from Sinaloa, a northwestern state which has traditionally been the drug heartland of Mexico. We have lived with the realities of drug trafficking for decades. I remember as a child the cowboys on my family's ranch would talk about growing opium in the mountains. In Mexico we didn't have a drug abuse problem like there was in the US, and, really, drug trafficking was just seen as a more lucrative alternative than farming beans. It was also always understood that the drugs were for the *gringos*. While some things have remained the same, there have been changes that have radically altered the spirit of these dinner-table stories.

CC Can you specify what changed?

NA Whatever ethical code existed that protected families and kept the violence between the narcos themselves has been shattered so that today the violence seems to permeate our communities. Perhaps this has simply to do with the reality that the drug trade has grown tremendously. Or perhaps it is Calderón's declaration of war that has made violence more permissible, on all levels. Or perhaps it is simply human greed and power and the craziness of war. I don't know what the single reason may be, nor do I think there is only one, but what is undeniable is that those same cowboys who talked about growing opium in the mountains are now fearing for the lives of their children—if they haven't already suffered the loss. Between the lack of economic opportunities in Mexico and the seduction of a quick buck, it is very hard for them to keep their children away from the drug trafficking or the violence around it.



CC What about the cemetery?

NA I knew that I wanted to make a film about this violence and one morning (I was still half asleep) I became very curious about the cemetery. I'd shot an interview there in 2004 for my film *The Other Side*. I got my plane ticket within a week (I live in Mexico City most of the time) and when I got to the cemetery I was just amazed by how much it had grown. The mausoleums that in 2004 seemed huge now seemed insignificant. Most striking was the enormous hole that a tractor was digging for 300 more bodies. It was July 2009 and about 18,000 people had died. A year later, when I finished shooting, the death toll was about 35,000. The first hole was full and already covered with mausoleums, and a second hole was being dug. I was struck that it was a mirror of the violence and the socioeconomic realities in which such violence flourishes.

CC So your attraction is personal.

NA Sinaloa is home for me. I've had a pretty nomadic life since childhood but it is the place where my strongest childhood memories were made, the memories that make me who I am. And so I keep going back. I love the light, the heat, the people, the food. And I think that is what makes me want to look at the violence with some kind of humanity and tenderness.

CC When thinking about the "culture" of death in Mexico, I'm reminded of Roberto Bolaño's *2666*—and I'm wondering about its relationship to *El Velador*. The documentary "silence" in parts of that vast book echoes the silence of the victims in your film. You share a family name with a major character, the psychic seer, Florita Almada.

NA I haven't read *2666*, but Bolaño seems to be on everyone's mind lately. I don't know anything about the Almada character in the book. But do you know who the Almada Brothers are? I've never met them, but they are supposedly my relatives—and they're big B-movie stars. They made dozens of *narco-churro video-homes*.

CC That is uncanny. I did a quick check of IMDb and I have located your long-lost family! Mario, Fernando, and Horacio (I think) seem to have made an infinite number of *narco-churros*. I'm not exactly sure what that genre is, except I'm guessing crime-driven, low-budget Mexican features, made for TV?

NA Oh, my relatives definitely aren't lost! I've just never met them—although I'm hoping to meet Mario soon. They are incredibly prolific. If you ever go by a Mexican video store just ask for an Almada Brothers movie. You will learn a lot about Mexican cinema—popular Mexican cinema. *Video-home* I think means straight to video—not even TV— but I'm not one hundred percent sure. And yes, most are crime-driven, low-budget B-movies.

CC I live in Sunset Park in Brooklyn and am surrounded by Mexican video stores.

NA It's interesting that these videos are by no means a contemporary genre. For example, *Contrabando y Traición*, one of the most famous, is from 1977. It is based on a Tigres del Norte *corrido*, and *corridos* historically were like musical-newspapers, ballads in honor of popular heroes. The contemporary *corridos* are mostly about immigrants and drug traffickers. The *corridos* and *narco-churros* were probably the first attempt to talk about and address the problems of violence in the media.

CC I found all of this very fascinating and amusing until I came across a description of one Almada Brothers film that was much too close to real life. *Regalo Caro*, aka *High-Priced Gift*, has the following plot synopsis: "After a ferocious confrontation with the federal police, El Chacha gets away and is betrayed by his partner Mariano, who believes him to be dead. El Chacha soon becomes the most powerful druglord, and for his birthday, other druglords pay their respect by bringing him presents. Barbarino, a loyal servant of El Chacha, has no money to buy his boss a gift and decides instead to give him a gift of surprise: the head of his greatest enemy, Mariano." Yikes. Your film, *El Velador*, involves a severed head that the audience never sees. Please explain to the readers the head's significance—for you, personally. (Tough question, I know.)

NA Your memory is right. In the film, there is a news report on the radio about a severed head that was left on the tomb of a big drug lord. I had initially thought that this was a threat, but it was explained to me that this was, in fact, an offering. I do not show the head, as I do not show any graphic violence in the film—I believe that the graphic images of violence that we see in the press have produced a numbing effect that has made us fearful and powerless.

CC This is a key aesthetic and moral element of your film—especially in your use of sound.

NA The news report struck me on many levels. The reporter says that an employee from the cemetery found the head with a red flower in its ear. I'd been filming at the cemetery for about six months, so I had a very good sense of the place and the workers, and I could imagine all too clearly one of them stumbling upon such a horrific sight. The idea that this could be part of someone's day at work seems deeply unjust. The violence extends beyond the perpetrator of the crime and the victim to all those who have to live in its shadow.

CC The violence extends directly into your life.

NA A caretaker at my family's ranch was tortured and beaten while at work. He immediately quit his job out of fear. But a month or two later he came back asking for his job because he couldn't find any other work. I don't know how clearly these two incidents seem to relate, but to me they depict a much deeper violence. On the one hand the opportunities to make an honest living are scarce, and, on the other hand, they don't guarantee any protection from drug violence. So put yourself in the shoes of one of these people. What would you do?

CC I would move to Brooklyn.

NA The other thing that really struck me about the radio report was the detail of the red flower behind the ear. In her essay “Regarding the Torture of Others” Susan Sontag wrote “The horror of what is shown in the photographs cannot be separated from the horror that the photographs were taken.”

CC Sontag repositions accountability—is that what you mean? Then you, the filmmaker (or photographer) become more responsible (or accountable), or at least equally responsible?

NA Sontag was discussing the Abu Ghraib photographs. So, in that context, the photographer is the person committing the atrocity. I understand how out of context her statement may seem here. To reposition accountability so that the filmmaker/photographer becomes responsible for the act in the photograph probably isn't entirely accurate. But the idea of shared accountability—that the photographer is a participant and not a removed objective observer—I find very valuable. The idea of “the horror that the photographs were taken” is one that we tend to forget when we look at photographs simply as evidence (which is the way I think most people look at pictures in the news).

CC To assume they were unmediated.

NA In Mexico the press is flooded with graphic images of the atrocities committed. To look at these reproductions in the newspapers without questioning the role that they play in how we understand and look at violence is a terrible mistake. I would probably go so far as to say that to *not* think about the role that they play in the violence is to be blindsided.

CC It is very difficult to see beyond the surface of this sort of thing. You just avert your eyes—and your mind.

NA If we reduce the idea of violence to the horrific acts that we see in the press, then we fail to understand the deeper systematic violence. All we see is the atrocity. We no longer see the humanity of the victim or the perpetrator, nor the violence that is inflicted on the community that lives within this context. The more grotesque the image, the more removed the spectator is from its reality. They disengage from implications and responsibilities. By not showing the photograph of the head or other images of violence I was hoping to place the viewer *inside* the violence. Does that make sense?

CC Arguably, it becomes more violent. You don't photograph the head but you let the audience “listen” to the horror.

NA The imagination can sometimes be more powerful than a photograph. To suggest and to evoke rather than to illustrate is a way to engage and commit the viewer.

To me it was evident that whoever placed the flower behind the ear was posing the head for a picture to be taken. So there is a game at play in which the media is key—it is important to ask ourselves who is being served by the dissemination of these images and to what end.

CC Images are one thing, but it's hard to imagine an actual severed head entering my day-to-day existence. As a sheltered American, I realize I'm also making somewhat irresponsible associations because of my distance from actual Mexican facts and experience. For instance, with Bolaño, I'm equating the violence of Ciudad Juárez with the situation in Sinaloa—two very different regions.

NA Yes, this happens often. Right now Juárez makes the news because it is one of the most violent cities in the world. Sadly Juárez has become synonymous with Mexico to those who don't know the country. But I think a few things happen when we try to talk about Juárez, comparing it to other regions of Mexico. The femicides of Juárez have been going on since 1993. It is a mistake to conflate them with the violence that we are seeing in relation to the drug war.

CC When I Google *femicide*, the immediate reference is to "femicide in Juárez." Sinaloa, in terms of violence, is equated with homicide. Juárez, in terms of violence, appears to be the female counterpart. Is that at all correct?

NA Not exactly. Juárez has the femicides *and* the narco-violence. But honestly, I don't know that much about it—and I've never been—so I don't want to speak out of place. Also, Juárez is right on the border, so there's a different culture and a different set of problems because of its immediate proximity to the US. The *maquiladoras* [assembly plants] attract young single workers from the rest of the country. The city is a transit point for people and commerce, so its social makeup and the mechanisms by which it functions are quite unique. I read in the *New York Times* a few years ago an article titled "Two Sides of a Border: One Violent, One Peaceful," and it described El Paso, Texas, as the third safest city in the United States, bordering Ciudad Juárez, a city being "ripped apart" by violence. The article discussed the fear that the violence in Juárez would spread to El Paso, "a tidy desert town."



CC It's all very black and white.

NA And it's the kind of writing that perpetuates the notion of the border as a barrier from something dirty and evil rather than a shared space for which both sides are responsible. As you travel south things change—every 100 feet? Maybe.

CC It just makes me think that every 100 feet we have very different kinds of victims.

NA If I go back to your original question, what is most interesting is the idea of “silenced victims.” The women of Juárez are victims without question, but it is much harder to convince someone that the drug lords are victims, particularly when we see the horrific crimes that they commit spread across our newspapers. Yet, if we are a bit more dispassionate and look at the socioeconomic reality in Mexico, then our notion of the victim changes, and rather than victims, I think these are people who’ve been disempowered and much of that disempowerment has been achieved through silencing.

CC Now you are talking about the silent, yet living, victims?

NA I guess I wasn’t distinguishing between the living and the dead victims, nor was I thinking of silence as a result of their death. I was thinking of silence in relation to power, silence as a form of repression, whether it is direct or indirect. Your question caught me off guard because it made me realize that while the cemetery is obviously a place for the dead, I never thought that I was making a film about dead people. In part that is because the crisis that we’re living is so real and present, but also because the victims are so young and the people who mourn them are too. The cemetery is oddly full of life.

CC Let’s move, for a moment, from Mexico to Brooklyn. Every day I walk by a massive graveyard on the way to work. Green-Wood Cemetery is, to my mind, one of the most gorgeous and meditative places in New York City. It’s my graveyard. Just about everybody in my neighborhood walks by it every day—because it sits next to a major subway station. But I feel like everyone ignores it. Why is it that the sense of this space, the relationship the passerby has to it, feels so different from “your” graveyard?

NA Different cultures look at death differently. Octavio Paz wrote, “The Mexican, in contrast, is familiar with death. (He) jokes about it, caresses it, sleeps with it, celebrates it. It is one of his favorite toys and his most steadfast love.” I think Americans are completely opposite in this regard. You see it everywhere, from the difference between the chickens hanging with feathers in Mexican markets, to those skinless, boneless breasts packed in Styrofoam in American-style supermarkets.

CC There’s also the question of age—by which I mean the age of the residents.

NA Yes. I think the cemetery in my film is a bit different because the dead are so young, most are under 30. So there, death seems to have become a strange rite of passage. And for those in the same precarious path of life, they have to embrace death in this way so that they do not live in fear of it all of the time. Because they know it is imminent. Make sense?



CC One of the great things about your film is that it makes that “foreign” concept make sense! Your cemetery is different from my cemetery. It looks as if *the living* could move into yours. Mine is only for ghosts, or Goths, or Transylvanians. The tidy, clean glass windows of the mausoleums in your film almost seem to deny death. “The departed” have merely relocated to a different neighborhood.

NA A lovely way to put it! That’s exactly how it feels. One of the things the cemetery construction workers always lament is that their homes aren’t as luxurious as the tombs they are building. Especially given that some have electricity, air conditioning, marble floors—and that most of the workers make about 200 pesos a day (less than 20 dollars).

CC Apparently, some people believe the dead deserve to live *better* than the living. I can imagine what a poor worker must think as he constructs a mausoleum that looks like a luxury condo.

NA Many workers live in housing projects built and subsidized by Infonavit, a governmental agency. These are developments of hundreds of serial houses that completely erase any trace of the individual. When you think that many of the drug dealers and construction workers come from the same social strata, you can really understand the significance of the mausoleums which, above all else, seem to be expressions of individuality.

CC We’ve all seen the small photographs of the dead on gravestones, but in Culiacán you have posters, or, what are they, billboards? We say, in memoriam, “to celebrate the life of . . .” but in Culiacán it really looks like the celebration has turned into full-fledged marketing.

NA They are *lonas*—which I think translates as *tarps*—large plastic banners. What I love about them is that the photographs are mostly taken from people’s cell phones, so their quality is terrible, which gives them a very innocent “home movie” feeling—not the nostalgic Super-8 home movies, but today’s pixelated equivalent. Also, people make fantastic collages on the *lonas* that are incredibly revealing visual homages to the dead.

CC I’m having another audio flashback: I am remembering a moment when you can hear a mother wailing on the sound track. Her grief is unbearable. You never see her, correct?

NA That is right. The mother and family are off camera. The mother’s wailing is a horrific sound. It gets under your skin precisely because we don’t see her, so we can imagine her as any mother, my mother, your mother. At the end of my first film, a short titled *All Water Has a Perfect Memory*, which is about the death by drowning

of my sister, my mother says, “And I’ve thought so many times that since the beginning of time, a mother’s wail of agony, of losing a child, has probably always sounded the same, the same as mine. Always.” Something about that sound of the mother’s wail is absolutely primordial.

CC A sound, needless to say, that’s unforgettable. Your film has been called “a film about violence without violence.” I would argue that your use of sound is, at times, incredibly violent. I know we’ve mentioned this before, in terms of the severed head, but could you elaborate a little more on how you use sound to, so to speak, fill in the blanks?

NA I work with a very talented sound designer named Alejandro de Icaza. Much of our conversations were precisely about the violence of sound. Since violence is never visible, and yet the film is about violence, the only way to represent it was through sound. So, for example, the eeriness of the place and the claustrophobic quality of being trapped in the cemetery is felt through the deep constant rumble of the highway in the distance, and the hard buzzing of the cicadas. Also, sound makes the invisible present. So when you hear a *tambora* band in the distance, you are made aware of the forbidden, dangerous world that you can’t see. It is like children and their fear of the dark—what you can’t see, what you imagine, what you hear—is more ominous than what you see. Sound is like smell in that it seems to work on our subconscious much more strongly than the image does.

CC In the future you could easily make a horror film. Or perhaps you already have.



—Chris Chang joined the editorial staff of *Film Comment* in 2001. In addition to that magazine, he has contributed to *Audubon*, *Frieze*, *Positif*, and other publications. He is the author of *Reel Work: Artists’ Film and Video of the 1970s* and *Va-Va-Voom!: Classic Hollywood Pin-Ups*. He contributed an essay to the monograph *James Casebere* and wrote an introduction to a new edition of Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence* for Barnes and Noble’s Books on Film series. He lives within walking distance of Green-Wood Cemetery and visits the graves of Lola Montes and Jean-Michel Basquiat whenever he gets the chance. Photo by Mark Anderson

10/Nov 2010

Artículo disponible en: <http://thecitylovesyou.com/cinereX/entrevista-a-natalia-almada-directora-de-el-general/>

Plutarco Elías Calles fue una figura importante pero controversial en la historia de México. Un maestro de escuela que pasó a ser caudillo de la Revolución, luego Presidente y después Jefe Máximo, con el poder de afectar directamente las decisiones del presidente en turno. A él se le adjudican muchos avances importantes para el Estado mexicano, así como muchas atrocidades.

El Documental *El General* es el esfuerzo de la bisnieta de Calles, [Natalia Almada](#) (*Al Otro Lado*, 2006) de observar a través de una serie de grabaciones hechas por su abuela antes de morir, la memoria de Calles, así como su relación con la identidad del México actual.

Más que una biografía a fondo del Jefe Máximo, *El General* es una visión poética de México y su cultura, yuxtapuesta con la difusa memoria de un ancestro que nunca es fácil definir. La tierna voz de la abuela de Almada, contrasta con la figura impositiva de Calles, al mismo tiempo que la cámara captura personajes y elementos claves del México contemporáneo.

Natalia Almada se sentó a platicar un rato con CinereX sobre su relación con su bisabuelo, lo versátil del género del documental y el reto de la objetividad.



CINEREX: En *El General* hay una decisión de hacer una exploración de tu relación personal y familiar con la memoria de tu bisabuelo, más que hacer una biografía del General Plutarco Elías Calles. ¿Fue esto algo planeado desde la concepción del documental?

Natalia Almada: El documental nace realmente de las grabaciones de mi abuela. Ella lo que quería era hacer una biografía de su papá. Yo veía en las grabaciones el esfuerzo de mi abuela por reconciliar el recuerdo de su padre con el personaje histórico.

Para mí, el interés no era tanto hacer una biografía de Calles, sino el proceso de mi abuela de hacer memoria.

CNRX: ¿Hay en *El General* un paralelo entre la visión que tiene tu abuela de su padre y la visión que tú misma tienes sobre tu bisabuelo, y el peso de su legado sobre ti?

NA: La verdad no lo siento tanto, si no fuera por los casetes nunca hubiera hecho una biografía o un trabajo sobre Calles, como no uso el nombre y he vivido fuera mucho, ya es una figura muy lejana para mí.

CNRX: Al ver la película, se siente una cierta frustración mientras escuchas las grabaciones de tu abuela, al ver que ella no se acuerda de muchos detalles o anécdotas de su padre.

La película misma lo recalca en muchos fragmentos. Es un recuento sentimental, más que factual.

NA: Claro, es una frustración de género, porque todos piensan que el documental tiene que ser factual, verídico, cómo una biografía y no, no es cierto. Hay documentales que son mucho más poéticos, más libres. Por eso me interesaba irme más por ese camino.

Para alguien que no sabe o no le interesa nada sobre Calles o México, todavía hay un punto de entrada a la película, por un lado más abstracto, ese juego entre lo de hoy y el pasado; que tampoco es tan lógico y a veces es más como un juego.

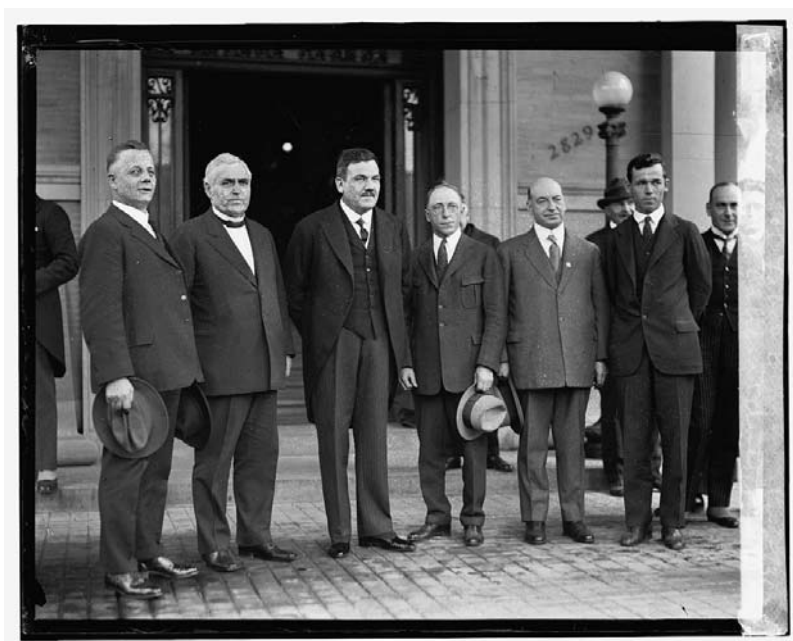


CNRX: Si, hay mucho juego en la película, en las tomas, en la fotografía más que nada, se nota un interés de romper el esquema de lo que la mayoría esperaría en un documental.

NA: Digo, no es algo único para nada, muchos documentales hacen eso. Pero si, no me interesa mucho ese documental didáctico.

CNRX: El General es al mismo tiempo un retrato de la memoria de tu abuela sobre Calles, pero también es un retrato de México, específicamente el centro de la capital ¿Es para utilizarla como un representante del México del presente y su relación con la historia?

NA: No exactamente, al principio del documental empecé con los “audios” y las grabaciones de archivo histórico y tenía la voz de mi abuela muy presente al escuchar esos cassettes, porque los había escuchado muchas veces (risa) y ello cambiaba mi forma de ver mi entorno. A raíz de eso decidí empezar a salir a la calle y filmar lo que me encontraba.



CNRX: En las partes filmadas en el centro de la ciudad hay una cierta visión, tal vez foránea, como de afuera viendo hacia adentro. Me pregunto si era de tus primeras veces en la ciudad.

NA: Ya había estado muchas veces en la ciudad, pero si había regresado recientemente y en ese sentido si hubo en reencuentro con la ciudad.

Mi mamá es de Estados Unidos y yo crecí mitad y mitad y he vivido fuera mucho. Lo que dices se me hace curioso, porque a la vez en el extranjero la película es muy mexicana. Cómo las imágenes del hombre instalando el gas, ya que en otros países no circula el gas de esa manera y gente de otros países lo ve y dice: *¿qué es eso?*



CNRX: Si más bien, los mexicanos, que vivimos aquí, no nos fijamos tanto en esos detalles.

NA: Es el privilegio de tener dos culturas, es una visión de adentro y de afuera al mismo tiempo.

CNRX: Hay una parte en la película donde preguntas si Calles fue “un parásito más”, como los demás políticos que son frecuentemente mentados por los individuos que entrevistas en el documental. ¿Eso era de parte tuya, o de tu abuela, o una pregunta obligada que se tenía que hacer, aunque sea retóricamente?

NA: Pues claro que es la pregunta que está siempre presente ¿no? Al ver la figura histórica uno siempre está intentado hacer un juicio. No sólo la bisnieta o la hija, sino el historiador y la sociedad, siempre estas diciendo: “tal presidente fue bueno o fue malo”. Lo hacemos con Salinas, con Fox, con presidentes, tal vez, más recientes.

Uno quiere hacer un juicio que sea preciso y blanco y negro, que no sea gris. Entonces es una pregunta retórica.



CNRX: Pero no sientes una perspectiva distinta, ¿al ser pariente de Calles?

NA: Pues me imagino que sí, me imagino que cualquier otra persona diría que mi juicio está pintado por el hecho de ser pariente, por las historias que yo haya escuchado, no sé, pero tampoco lo veo como muy interesante.

CNRX: Pero la película es imparcial.

NA: No, más bien, trato de ser transparente, que es muy diferente. Si tomo un bando, pero desde un punto de vista. El problema en los medios es que dicen que son objetivos, y la objetividad en la vida casi siempre es imposible. Entonces para mí el reto más bien es ser transparente y saber de qué punto de vista se está hablando, tanto el mío como el de mi abuela, y no estar fingiendo.

CNRX: Muchas gracias Natalia.

NA: Al contrario, ¡Gracias a ti!

El General, ganadora del premio del Director en el Sundance Film Festival, se estrena este viernes 3 de Diciembre en: Cinemex Casa de Arte e Insurgentes, Cinopolis Interlomas, Cinemark CNA, Cineteca Nacional, Cine Lido y Cinemanía Loreto.

Entrevista por: Juan Carlos [Escalante](#)

2010

Artículo disponible: <http://www.documentary.org/content/jacqueline-donnet-emerging-documentary-filmmaker-award-natalia-almada>

By Thomas White

2009 Jacqueline Donnet Emerging Documentary Filmmaker Award: Transcending Borders: Natalia Almada

[Winter 2010](#)

Natalia Almada was born in Sinaola, Mexico, to a Mexican father and an American mother, grew up in Chicago, and now maintains residences in both Brooklyn and Mexico City. It is this dual citizenship that best informs her work, that enables her to both transcend the mythical border between two nations and two cultures, and engage it with a deeper gaze--capturing the inherent dualities, nuances and grey areas, and infusing her inquiries into the predominant socioeconomic issues that define Mexican-American relations with an abiding sense of poetry and music.

Almada received her master's degree from Rhode Island School of Design--not in film, but in photography. That discipline, so predicated upon finding and capturing a soul in a frame, led her to the moving image. The three works she has produced in the past decade--*All Water Has a Perfect Memory*, *Al Otro Lado* and *El General*--demonstrate a singular vision, a resolve to take various sub-genres in documentary--the essay, the personal documentary, the social issue documentary and the history documentary--and make them her own.

Documentary talked with this year's Jacqueline Donnet Emerging Documentary Filmmaker honoree about photography, duality, and the territory between history and memory.

Documentary: *You earned your MFA from Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), where your main artistic discipline was photography. Talk about how that art form has informed your documentary work. How did your initial training in photography evolve into your documentary career?*

Natalia Almada: I had a really inspiring video teacher at RISD and fell in love with moving images, so I proceeded to insert myself as much as I could into the film department. Yet, I still think that I think as a photographer in terms of my relationship to the image and to the frame. In some regards, I was lucky to have studied something related but different because I felt much more free to invent my own way of doing things.

Sometimes when I'm working on grant proposals and feeling frustrated trying to write a clear treatment about a film that I haven't begun making, I think back to making my short film *All Water Has a Perfect Memory*. I didn't have a clue about what I was doing or what the film would be like in the end, and it was wonderful. I had an impulse and I went for it. And I let that lead to the next impulse...until one impulse after the next, I had a film. I was driven by a set of inquiries and ideas that I wanted to materialize, rather than by a desire to make a film per se.

I think I use the camera as a way to see what I see. It is almost like a mirror, in that sense. It is the process of making documentaries that I love. I really do begin from a point of curiosity and pick up my camera to go explore that thing which caught my attention. It is a pretext to look at something more closely, to look at it differently, to understand how I see it and relate to it. If I didn't have this curiosity, then I'm not sure if I would feel driven to make films.

D: *You are the daughter of an American mother and a Mexican father, and you currently maintain homes in both Brooklyn and Mexico City. How has your bi-national/bicultural identity helped facilitate your inquiries into border dynamics, into larger questions about assimilation, immigration, multiculturalism?*

NA: I was flying from Mexico City to New York this past September when I noticed that the plane was full of unaccompanied minors. A boy who must have been about 10 was taking his little brother to the bathroom, and I had a flashback to flying with my brother back and forth when we were little. In many ways, these flights defined our childhood. Everything changed, from what we ate to the language we spoke. Without knowing, we were inside and outside in both countries and perhaps most at home in that space hovering in between. Back then, my brother and I were usually the only minors on the plane. It filled me with both sadness and hope to see all these children who I imagine were somehow inhabiting that same space in between.

Edward Said begins his biography with a quote about language that I think really describes the experience of growing up in a bicultural family and always living between two cultures. He writes, "I have never known what language I spoke first...or which one was really mine beyond any doubt. What I do know is that the two have always been together in my life, one resonating in the other, sometimes ironically, sometimes nostalgically, most often each correcting and commenting on, the other."

I don't think that my being bicultural triggers my interests in these issues as much as it shapes the way that I see things. I am interested in making the dualities and contradictions that Said describes in language, intrinsic to my films.

D: *Your first film, All Water Has a Perfect Memory, addresses a tragic personal loss--that of your sister in a drowning accident--through home movies, photographs and manufactured images, and the off-camera recollections and reflections of your mother, father, brother and you. You were two months old when your sister died. As your brother says in the film, "You came after...That made you more independent." How did that independence better enable you to render this memory cinematically?*

NA: I am not sure that it was the feeling of independence that led me to make *All Water Has a Perfect Memory* as much as it was the feeling that everyone in my family had a memory of something which I did not have. It was a sense of exclusion from this moment that deeply affected my family that led me to create a fictitious memory of my sister from the time I was very young.

Perhaps photography, more than cinema, has often been related to memory because of its relationship to the past and to time. The photograph is the memory object which tells us that something happened, that something was, and therefore that there is a memory of something. Making *All Water Has a Perfect Memory* was a way for me to fabricate a memory of something that I did not remember. I was interested in exploring the process of remembering and the subjectivity of memory. How could such an intimate event be remembered so differently? What were the points of amnesia, of contradiction, of similarity between each person's memory of the same moment?

D: *In your first feature-length film, Al Otro Lado, you assemble a range of characters from both sides of the border--fishermen and farmers, corrido composers and performers, coyotes, Border Patrol agents and vigilantes--to help address a complicated array of interconnected issues, all related to the post-NAFTA world of illegal immigration and drug trafficking. But to me, the corrido, as channeled through Chalino, the Tupac-esque martyr/icon of the genre, and Magdiel, the struggling artist, is the heart and soul of the film. Talk about the challenges of maintaining the corrido through-line, while effectively addressing an ongoing sociopolitical issue.*

NA: I spent much of my childhood on a cattle ranch in Sinaloa, Mexico, and I remember the cowboys and fisherman talking about opium fields in the mountains and their adventures across the border. These issues were just a part of everyday life that everyone encountered in one shape or another. Meanwhile in the States, I went to elementary school in Chicago during the "Say No to Drugs" campaign, and I was always hyper-aware that

my dual citizenship was not a privilege shared by most Mexicans. I was interested in making a film that would look at immigration and drug trafficking not from a moral perspective, but from an economic perspective, one that would look at the economic crisis as the catalyst for one to illegally immigrate or traffic. I also wanted to make a film in which the immigrants and traffickers were not reduced to being just immigrants and traffickers without history and culture.

The *corrido* tradition has existed for over 200 years in Mexico and has historically served as an underground musical newspaper of sorts. The protagonists of most of the contemporary *corridos* are drug traffickers and immigrants who've beaten the system, so I wanted to use the music in much the same way that one might use a narrator in a more traditional documentary. Rather than a voice of authority who speaks from the outside, it is the voice of the people in the film who are most often disempowered and silenced.

It was also a very obvious decision to use the *corrido* because it is such an integral part of Sinaloan culture. It is the music you hear coming out of car radios when you drive down the street and in every bar and bodega you walk into.

D: *Your most recent film, El General, in a way picks up where All Water Has a Perfect Memory leaves off, in that personal memory--the audio tapes of your grandmother telling the story of her father, President Plutarco Elias Calles--serves as a touchstone for a broader and deeper exploration of how it connects to national history. While the former film is inspired by Toni Morrison's quote from her essay: "All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was," El General evoked for me a Tom Waits lyric: "And the things you can't remember tell the things you can't forget/That history puts a saint in every dream."*

Talk about how you addressed the challenge of rendering history and reconciling it with personal memory.

NA: The film is precisely about that contradiction between history and memory. In her recordings, my grandmother was trying to reconcile her memories of her father with history's portrait of him. So my goal was not to render history and create a biography of Calles but rather to look at how we remember and how history is fabricated. I was not interested in resolving the contradictions but rather exploring them and allowing them to be the heart of the film.

In many regards the film is like a stream of consciousness between past and present. As I listened to my grandmother's memories over and over again, I had the sensation that her voice accompanied me in the present and changed the way in which I saw the things around me. She was not simply giving me a memoir of my family's past, but really changing the way I saw and understood Mexico today. It was for this reason that it became rather intuitive to begin filming on the streets of Mexico City as a way to further complicate the very contradictions that my grandmother was dealing with and look at the shadow that the past casts over the present.

There is a beautiful quote from [Chris Marker's] *Sans Soleil* that I use in the film: "We do not remember, we rewrite memory much as history is re-written." The narrator then asks, "How do we remember thirst?" I was very moved by this idea of trying to understand how we remember thirst and how we film the memory of thirst.

D: *You both direct and edit your work, and you have edited other documentaries. How do you both reconcile the roles of director and editor--and keep them separate?*

NA: I decided to become an editor because I didn't go to film school and I thought it would be the best place to learn how to make films.

D: *What documentary and documentary makers have served as inspirations for you?*

NA: Perhaps because my background is not in film, I find that I am inspired as much by fiction, painting, literature and other art forms as I am by documentary. There are bits and pieces of different films, quotes from

certain books and feelings that I remember having while standing in front of given paintings that have inspired different aspects of my work.

I think I find encouragement to keep making films when I look at someone like Lourdes Portillo, who in many regards opened the door and paved the road for someone like me. And I don't think I could keep making films if I didn't have the support of my peers like Cristina Ibarra, Alex Rivera, Bernardo Ruiz and Vangie Griego, who are all out there making their films.

El General and All Water Has a Perfect Memory are both distributed by Women Make Movies; El General, for which Almada earned the Documentary Directing Award at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, will air on PBS' P.O.V. in 2010. Al Otro Lado is distributed by Subcine; it aired on P.O.V in 2006. For more about Natalia Almada and her work, go to www.altamurafilms.com.

Thomas White is editor of Documentary magazine.

5. Documentos audiovisuales

Conferencia Natalia Almada El Velador FICM 2011



Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7V6iQewE9E>

Entrevista Natalia Almada



Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0l3KVkOBhY>

Documental "El Velador"



Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSN-LE35rw4>

POV INTERVIEW WITH SIMON KILMURRY 09/27/2012



Ver aquí: <http://www.pbs.org/pov/elvelador/video-interview.php>

Natalia Almada Acclaimed filmmaker Natalia Almada, whose *El General* and *Al Otro Lado* both premiered on POV, talks about the making of her new documentary *El Velador*. She describes the conception of the film, her aesthetic choices, and her creative production process which culminated in her visually striking and powerful film.

Natalia Almada Q&A - El Velador



Parte 1: <http://vimeo.com/33421472>

Parte 2: <http://vimeo.com/33421690>

El velador Arturo Aguilar y Fernando Bañuelos



Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMvaZtQxqnM>

Cinéma: "El Velador" à Cannes



Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bJYSkVX9-Q>

TEDxSanMigueldeAllende - Natalia Almada - Through the Lens



Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziM8icCICog>

Recipient of the 2009 Sundance Documentary Directing Award for her film "El General," Almada's most recent film "El Velador" is a haunting look at violence through the eyes of a night watchman in Mexico's most notorious narco-cemetery. Her previous credits include "All Water Has a Perfect Memory", an experimental short film that received international recognition; "Al Otro Lado," her award-winning debut feature documentary about immigration, drug trafficking and corrido music. Almada's films have screened at The Sundance Film Festival, The Museum of Modern Art, The Guggenheim Museum and The Whitney Biennial and all three feature documentaries have broadcast on the award-winning series POV. Almada is a MacDowell Colony Fellow, a 2008 Guggenheim Fellow and a 2010 USA Artist Fellow. She graduated with a Masters in Fine Arts in photography from the Rhode Island School of Design and shares her time between Mexico City and Brooklyn, New York.

Entrevista con la directora Natalia Almada, sobre su película El general (2010)



Ver aquí: <http://vimeo.com/18638869>

TropiChat: Latin-O-American



Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5A9mrsZmiU>

Documentary Filmmaker Natalia Almada: 2012 MacArthur Fellow



Ver aquí: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=744hRY7cD_E

GRITtv: Natalia Almada



Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D7-4TNjLuY>

Filmmaker Natalia Almada describes the way she realized that our images from the past come from fiction--and her decision to use classic cinema clips in her nonfiction film about Mexico's history. Distributed by Tubemogul.

Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T96AFLMWSRE>

Filmmaker Natalia Almada explains that when making her movie *El General*, she used the past and present enmeshed to understand both better. Distributed by Tubemogul.

Natalia Almada en la Gira Ambulante 2010



Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ExRgQJbKCU>

Cinegarage. Entrevista. Natalia Almada



Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZlqwGsUzkY>

El General. TeleSUR "Sala A" FICG 2009



Ver aquí: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64_uGo0wlAg

Festival Internacional de Cine Guadalajara 2009

El General. Dirección de Natalia Almada. México. Pasado y presente se encuentran cuando la cineasta Natalia Almada rescata una serie de grabaciones sobre su bisabuelo Plutarco Elías Calles, general revolucionario y presidente de México en 1924. El tiempo se borra en este fascinante retrato de una familia y un país que viven bajo la sombra del pasado. Ganadora del Festival de Sundance como mejor documental.

Nueva York: Episodio 65: Mariachi Real de México, Natalia Almada



Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nmp3qtuWIDs> *min 12*

A continuación, en el Lincoln Center, conversamos con la directora mexicano-americana Natalia Almada sobre su documental "El General", película en la que explora la relación entre la memoria personal y colectiva de México a través de las grabaciones realizadas por su abuela, hija del controvertido general Plutarco Elías Calles. Este documental recibió el premio a Mejor Dirección en el Festival de Cine de Sundance.

Indocumentales-Discussion of Al Otro Lado by Natalia Almada



Ver aquí: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5ktS0fqZJw>

"INDOCUMENTALES/UNDOCUMENTARIES THE US/MEXICO INTERDEPENDENT FILM SERIES is a collaborative series (sponsored by What Moves You?, Cinema Tropical, and NYU Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies-CLACS) designed to inform, inspire, and enable an open exchange of views on some of today's most pressing immigration-related issues. In addition to showcasing documentary feature films by directors from both sides of the border, each screening will be followed by an informal interactive discussion with special guests of diverse backgrounds, sectors and experience. From hate crimes, to drug trafficking as an industry and cultural phenomena, to grappling with cultural identity, to cross-border activism, to coping with discrimination in the U.S. legal system, and understanding the impact of emigration in Mexico, Indocumentales/Undocumentaries explores the web of complicity, indifference, and economic interests involved in maintaining the status quo, in both U.S. and Mexican societies, and offers an opportunity for people to think about solutions. Indocumentales/Undocumentaries film screenings and dialogues will travel to diverse cultural, academic and community centers across the United States. Along the way, the Indocumentales on-line resource packet will expand to include new inputs that add to our understanding of the issues, and help connect individuals and organizations working to address them.