



70th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Encounters

5 À 7 FILMS & MUTOKINO PRESENT

LOS CONDUCTOS

A FILM BY CAMILO RESTREPO
COPRODUCED BY MONTAÑERO CINE & IF YOU HOLD A STONE

The background of the entire page is a dark, moody photograph of two men. They are both wearing light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and have their faces painted white, with dark eye makeup and beards. They are positioned in a dark, wooded area with dense foliage. The man on the left is looking upwards and to the right, while the man on the right is looking directly at the camera.

LOS CONDUCTOS

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY CAMILO RESTREPO

2020 - 70 minutes - France, Colombia, Brazil - Color - 1:85 - 5.1 Dolby
Spanish (Subtitles available in English & French)

Shot on Kodak 16mm Film

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BERLINALE SCREENING SCHEDULE

FRI. 21, 8:45 PM @ CINEMAXX 5 + 10 (PRESS ONLY)

SAT. 22, 12:30 PM @ CINEMAXX 7 (WORLD PREMIERE)

SUN. 23, 2:15 PM @ CINEMAXX 15 (MARKET)

SUN. 23, 9:00 PM @ CUBIX 6

MON. 24, 8:30 PM @ HAUS DER BERLINER FESTSPIELE

TUE. 25, 6.30 PM @ XENON KINO

SUN. 1, 2.15 PM @ INTERNATIONAL

A man with long, wavy, light-colored hair and a full, dark beard is shown from the chest up. He is shirtless and looking down with a serious expression at a knife he is holding in his right hand. The background is dark and textured, possibly a wall or a piece of fabric. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the man's features and the texture of his hair and beard.

SYNOPSIS

FREELY INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY.

Medellin, Colombia. Pinky is on the run. He has just freed himself from the grip of a religious sect. He finds a place to squat and a job in a t-shirt factory. Misled by his own faith, he questions everything.

But as he tries to put back together the pieces of his broken life, violent memories return to haunt him and ask for Revenge.

A photograph of two men in a forest. One man, with a beard and long hair, wearing a black t-shirt and pants, stands on a large log, holding a silver handgun. The other man, with short dark hair, wearing a white button-down shirt and light-colored pants, sits on the same log, looking towards the standing man. The background is a dense forest of tall, thin trees.

INTERVIEW WITH CAMILO RESTREPO

CONDUCTED BY DENNIS LIM

How did you meet Pinky and how did you decide to make a feature with him that draws on his life?

I met Pinky in 2013 when I was preparing my short film, *Like Shadows Growing as the Sun Goes Down* in which he ended up playing a role.

At this time, Pinky was eking out a living working part-time in a T-shirt printing factory and juggling on crossroads in the city of Medellin. We quickly became friends. He confided his story in me. A few months earlier, he had escaped from a religious sect where he had been for 8 years. He hated the person who ran the sect and under whose influence he had been living: a man who made all the members of the sect call him "Father". Pinky said he'd kill him if he were given the chance.

Pinky's account of his life left a deep impression on me. I was touched by his admission of weakness, by the story of his wake-up call, and by the pride he felt in knowing he was now free. But more than this, I was disturbed by the rapport someone so gentle and introverted could have with violence. The sect made much of its money through illegal activities. Pinky, like most of its members, was taught how to use a gun. In the name of the group's interests, he must have been involved - to a degree that I do not know - in violent actions.

Now freed from the grip of the sect, he believed that murdering the guru could be a radical way of putting an end to his suffering and preventing the indoctrination of further young people. For Pinky, violence remained a very tangible means to an end, rooted in the certitude that a good cause justifies an evil.

I spoke at length with Pinky about his desire for revenge. Gradually, the idea of helping Pinky to commit this crime, but to commit it fictitiously, emerged. The film began to take shape as we explored the possible ins and outs of the guru's murder.

How did you work with Pinky? Since the film acts out his desire for vengeance, is there a cathartic aspect to it for him?

During the development period of the script, which lasted several months, I spoke at length with Pinky and exchanged several written texts with him. To begin with, I asked him to describe how the sect functioned on a daily basis (the places, activities and relationships amongst its members). Little by little, we began to discuss his own experience in the sect and the close relationship he had with the leader.

Forced to find words to describe his time in the sect, Pinky was better equipped to understand the mechanisms of which he was a cog, by identifying the ways the sect functioned, those of which he was aware, and those of which he knew nothing. And yet, this new understanding did not quench his thirst for revenge. And this unfulfilled desire, his wish for annihilation, prevented him from moving on and from reconstructing his life for good.

The making of the film, in which Pinky plays his own role, therefore allowed him to create a new arrangement with the events he had lived through and those he had desired. In this way, the film was a trigger for Pinky's own catharsis. *Los Conductos* put Pinky on a path of self-reflection that continued long after the film was finished.

Pinky's self-questioning, however, does not invest the film with the cathartic function associated with theatre. The narrative and formal construction of the film prevents the identification between spectator and character necessary for catharsis: I deliberately chose to distance the spectator from the character through non-realistic filmmaking, thus limiting emotions in favour of a more analytical vision of Pinky's situation. In this way, the film is more rooted in the objectives of documentary than those of fiction.

What is the significance of the title for you? What (or who) do you see as the “conduits”?

This title came to me intuitively, and it is still quite difficult for me to find a precise justification for it. Through their common etymology, the Spanish words *conductos* (conduits, passages) and *conductas* (conduct, behavior) are very close.

There is a kind of irony in this proximity. How do the notions of narrowness, constraint and confinement, which are linked to “conduits”, relate to our behavior in society, the “social conduct” that binds us to others? Is it necessary to “get out of the conduits” in order to be able to “conduct” yourself in a manner that allows you to take control of your life? Pinky’s journey in the film, his quest for free will, echoes these questions.

What drew you to exploring the theme of religion in contemporary Colombian society? Apart from Pinky’s own story, were there other incidents or situations you had in mind?

It is important to note that *Los Conductos* questions the instrumentalization of religion not belief itself. Instrumentalization of religion, and the links this instrumentalization forges with violence, are issues that have permeated Colombia’s history.

There has been a sharp increase in the number of churches and faith professions over the last few decades in the country. These churches, from all doctrines, thrive in poor neighborhoods notoriously abandoned by the state where young people struggle to imagine a future for themselves. Many people profit from the distress of those who seek in spirituality a more just world than the one that surrounds them. Pinky was one of their victims.

Over and above this relatively new phenomenon, Colombia has long been the arena of abuses committed in the name of religion. Taking into consideration the 20th Century alone, Colombia’s history, marked by civil wars and armed conflicts, has countless examples of men who used faith in an extremely ambivalent manner: church men who, by supporting the conservative party, tolerated massacres perpetrated against peasants in the opposing party during La Violencia; drug barons and criminals who claim to act against the State in defense of the poor; paid assassins who, as fervent believers, believe their faith gives them divine protection...

In contemporary Colombia, with its glaring social inequalities and highly corrupt institutions, this duplicitous moral is so deeply rooted in society that it has become trivialized. In this way, although on a different scale, it is striking to see how easily citizens blur the lines between personal interest and higher justification in order to legitimize actions that clearly defy morality or the law.

Can you discuss how you synthesized the documentary dimension with multiple fictional, indeed fable-like elements? The film draws on Pinky’s background and uses the figure of the real-life bandit Desquite, who is also invoked in the Gonzalo Arango poem that closes the film and also incorporates a story that is based on Luis Velez de Guevara’s “The Lame Devil.”

The recollection of the sect, the job in the T-shirt printing factory and his drug use, all reflect real aspects of Pinky’s life at the time of making the film. But this documentary aspect was not enough to convey the profound questioning he was going through. The manipulation of which he had been a victim had blurred for him the boundaries between good and evil, justice and injustice, truth and lies. To tell this dimension of Pinky’s story, I chose to introduce characters from literature and history into the film. Characters that have in common that they too questioned society’s morality.

Desquite was a bandit from the period of La Violencia in the 1950s, whose name is preserved for posterity. However, his bloody acts of warfare against the state, large landowners and supporters of the Conservative party made him a social vigilante in the eyes of the oppressed peasants he stood up for. His story is an example of the fine line between good and bad deeds.

The Lame Devil belongs to the widespread Hispano-American tradition of cunning devils. *El Diablo Cojelo*, Luis Velez de Guevara’s satire of 1641, depicts a devil that sets himself the task of revealing all of society’s hypocrisies to a young man. He is a deceitful guide who claims to know the truth about man’s deceitfulness.

I also included the story of a family of clowns who became famous in the ’80s thanks to comic sketches they had on a Colombian TV-show in which they denounced the country’s corruption through humor.



Los Conductos seems in many ways a logical culmination of your short films – it combines the focus on the Colombian reality of your earlier shorts with the stylized portraiture of your most recent works Cilaos and La Bouche. Did you see the feature as an opportunity to bring together a variety of formal approaches? What were some of the narrative techniques you wanted to work with in Los Conductos?

I think a dominant feature of my work has been to mix diverse narrative and formal approaches. In my films on Colombia, I decided to address the complexity of Colombian society without reducing it to a statement or argument. I explored the complexity of the country's situation, precisely by creating in my films a tangle of juxtaposed elements: archives, testimonies and stories I had encountered. In my following short films, *Cilaos* and *La Bouche*, both portraying timeless characters and family dramas, narrative progression is achieved through the breaking open of spatial and temporal structures.

Los Conductos combines the different approaches of my previous films.

The idea of using various historical and literary sources, as mentioned above, took form very early on in the creative process. It seemed to be that each source material brought a specific perspective to Pinky's moral and spiritual journey. But each one also carried its own formal codes: satire, journalism, diary, and fantastical tale... My main challenge was to bring these different characters and voices together without creating disorder and cacophony. I decided to show the contrasts between these differing genres by integrating passages with different registers into the overall structure of the film - from realistic to fantastical elements or from tragic to derisive tones.

What links the various characters is their ability to take unexpected paths in order to observe the world. Their questioning of society leads them to seek out points of view where the apparent reigning chaos might be ordered. This quest takes them to the city heights, underground and into its underworld. Pinky and his companions wander through the passages that connect these differing viewpoints. The world becomes a transitional space in which characters meet to become a reflection of one another, splitting up to become at times father at times son, assassin and redeemer, master and disciple, man and divinity, past and future. Mirror characters.

I was aware of the risk of losing the heart of Pinky's story in an overly complex web of references. But from the beginning, I wanted to liberate myself from linear narrative and a realistic cinema style so often used in world cinema that questions society through the depiction of a dropout.

One of the most striking ways in which you resist realism is in the film's visual style. Are visual ideas present for you at the writing stage? Is your sense of composition and color informed by your background in painting? And what lies behind your impulse to reject the dominant realist style of world cinema?

It is true that my working method comes from my training as a visual artist. My starting point is always sensory. My portrait films came out of the first impression I had when I met these people. In a way, to use a painter's terms, they were models that inspired me. Before trying to understand their stories, I had already begun to imagine how I would film their faces.

In addition to this, I pay a lot of attention to objects, materials and images I come across. I keep a very tactile approach to things and I try and convey this in my films. I realize that I intuitively filmed characters as they handled objects whilst reflecting on their own destiny.

This way of thinking with your hands is at the heart of my work. Each film's narrative is formed alongside the composition of sounds and images: texts, paintings, photographs, objects and testimonies, form an "audiovisual collage" from which the film emerges. I am unable to adopt a classical style of writing, where words precede images. For me, a film takes form right from its conception.

The way I work is incompatible with a realism, which obeys a very precise form of representation and writing. Realism should reinforce the viewer's idea of reality by respecting a logical and credible order. Its challenge is to make the spectator believe what he is seeing to be true. I wanted to reject the rapport between realism and truth to which we have become accustomed. There seems to be a tendency in modern world cinema to highlight the evils afflicting emerging countries through a tragic form of realism. Unfortunately, this recurring tragedy often ends up stigmatizing these same societies by locking them into a specific imagery that we perceive as reality.

A black and white portrait of Camilo Restrepo, a man with a beard and short hair, looking directly at the camera. The background is dark and textured.

DIRECTOR

CAMILO RESTREPO

Camilo Restrepo (1975, Medellín, Colombia) lives and works in Paris, France. His films have been selected in festivals such as Cannes Directors' Fortnight, Toronto IFF or New York IFF. He won the Pardino d'Argento at the Locarno IFF twice. Los Conductos is his first feature film.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2017 LA BOUCHE** · Director's Fortnight, Best Film Gijon
- 2016 CILAOS** · Silver Pardino Locarno Film Festival
- 2015 LA IMPRESIÓN DE UNA GUERRA** · Silver Pardino Locarno Film Festival
- 2014 COMO CRECE LA SOMBRA CUANDO EL SOL DECLINA**
- 2011 TROPIC POCKET**

CAST & CREW

WRITER-DIRECTOR CAMILO RESTREPO

PRODUCER: 5À7 FILMS, HELEN OLIVE & MARTIN BERTIER, FRANCE

PRODUCER: MUTOKINO, FELIPE GUERRERO, COLOMBIA

CO-PRODUCER: MONTAÑERO CINE, SIMÓN VÉLEZ, COLOMBIA

CO-PRODUCER: IF YOU HOLD A STONE, ANDRÉ MIELNIK, GUSTAVO BECK, BRAZIL

WITH THE SUPPORT OF LE FRESNOY, STUDIO NATIONAL DES ARTS CONTEMPORAINS

STARRING

PINKY: LUIS FELIPE LOZANO

DESQUITE: FERNANDO ÚSUGA HIGUÍTA & CAMILO RESTREPO

DOP: GUILLAUME MAZLOUM

CAMERA OPERATOR: CECILE PLAIS

EDITOR: CAMILO RESTREPO

SOUND EDITOR: JOSEFINA RODRIGUEZ

SOUND MIXER: MATHIEU FARNARIER

ORIGINAL MUSIC: ARTHUR B. GILLETTE WITH THE COLLABORATION OF JENNIFER HUTT

TECHNICAL INFO

SHOT ON KODAK 16MM FILM

70 MINUTES

FORMAT: 1:85 / COLOR / 5.1 DOLBY

LANGUAGE: SPANISH

SUBTITLES: ENGLISH & FRENCH



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