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FIRE WILL COME

a film by Oliver Laxe



CANNES FILM FESTIVAL
UN CERTAIN REGARD JURY PRIZE

Amador Arias

Benedicta Sánchez

Inazio Abrao

Elena Fernández

David de Poso

Alvaro de Bazal

Miramemira, 4 A 4 Productions
Tarantula, Kowalski Films
present

a film by **Oliver Laxe**

FIRE WILL COME

US DISTRIBUTOR
KIMSTIM
417 13TH STREET #2
BROOKLYN, NY 11215
info@kimstim.com
www.kimstim.com

NY PRESS CONTACT
SYLVIA SAVADJIAN
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synopsis

Amador Coro has been condemned for having provoked a fire. When he gets out of prison, nobody is waiting for him. He returns to his home town, a small village hidden in the mountains of rural Galicia, to live with his mother, Benedicta, and their three cows. Life goes by slowly, following the rhythm of nature. Until one night when a fire starts to devastate the region.

Interview with
Oliver Laxe, Director

FIRE

Galicia is one of the areas with the highest number of wildfires in Europe. Many fires are caused by lightening or various situations of carelessness, but most of them are provoked: for instance, when farmers use fire to regenerate their land but lose control of it, when fire is used as a tool for political protest, or to change the classification of plots, to deflate wood prices, or when politicians rely on it every year to negotiate outrageously juicy contracts... The reasons are diverse and everyone has their share of responsibility.

Wildfire has now become a major topic. Public opinion is searching for people to blame, it is out for blood. And of course, the figure of the pyromaniac is one of the most demonized today. I am always astounded when society ostracizes an individual.





From the second sequence of the film, we know that the main character has been charged with arson. Was he guilty? Has he made peace with the world, with nature? Is he a hopeless repeat offender? And what if he was innocent? We may ask ourselves those questions throughout the film. But once we get to share the daily life of Amador, his mother Benedicta and their animals, once we face with them the harsh weather conditions as they put the herd to pasture up hill and down dale, when we hear the stove purr or the rain patter continuously above their heads, we share the private lives of these people. We even end up liking Amador. As empathy sets in, questions dissolve. We can feel Amador's maladjustment, his suppressed pain, his spiritual scar. "If they make suffer, it's because they are suffering," Benedicta says.

G A L I C I A

I was born in France but my parents are both Galicians. My first memory of the Ancares mountains goes back to when I was four. Like most Spanish emigrants, we used to return to Spain every summer. My grandfather would wait for us next to his donkey to take us and our luggage to his home, at the end of a long goat path. Then, it was like reaching another world, at the heart of the mountains, where people lived in dignified and absolute submission to the elements. In humble and sweet acceptance of the nature on which they depended, and that reminded them of how fleeting their lives truly were. I was forever marked by their attitudes to life. I have lived in Galicia from age six to eighteen, then between Barcelona and London, and then in Morocco for ten years. But Galicia remains my home, my foundation. We shot the film in my grandparents' village, with villagers whom I have known since I was a child...

This land, on the borders of Europe, is ambivalent and full of contrasts: at once sweet and rough, rainy and light. But above all mysterious. I tried to capture its extreme beauty, a beauty so intense and unpredictable that it knows no restraint.

A M A D O R

In every film I ever directed, I first met real persons who made me want to film them and have them play my characters. Like Shakib in *You All Are Captains and Mimosas*, and now Amador in *Fire Will Come*. There is a poignant truth in Amador's melancholic eyes and sloping shoulders. He is handsome, but you can also tell that he is in pain: he is hypersensitive. And our modern world cannot accommodate such fragility.

Amador, who plays Amador, used to be a forest warden. Today, he takes care of sick animals in the forest. In Spanish, Amador means "the one who loves". I chose to keep his real first name for the character, who is a shy single man living in the mountains. Amador is the one who loves, yet most people see him as the one who destroys, apart from those who do not judge him: his mother and their animals. Amador is an expiatory figure, an innocent (like Shakib in *Mimosas*), a misfit. The madness of the world, the suffering of abused nature find an outlet in this man.

B E N E D I C T A

Like with Amador, I chose to keep her real name, which means "the blessed". Benedicta has also been a blessing for our film, in her own way. This woman is 83 years old...

When Amador gets out of prison, he goes straight to his



mother's place. She just raises her head and asks: "Are you hungry?", as if he had not been to jail, as if he had been there the day before, sitting quietly by the stove. Benedicta's love for Amador has no limits. Guilty or not, he is her son, and that's all that matters. She is quite similar to Galicia, a "motherland" rather than a fatherland.

It was Benedicta and Amador's first experience as film actors. There is a balance that you need to strike between the real person and the character. Amador is almost the same in the film and in real life, whereas Benedicta on screen has little to do with the real Benedicta. She is much too energetic for the part. I was concerned that her temperament might lead the audience to a hasty and reductive conclusion: that Benedicta was just a castrating mother and Amador a crushed child. But strangely enough, once we curbed Benedicta's overflowing energy, we got close to her core essence. It is the first time I ever connected to the essence of a person for a film... in a roundabout way.

DRY MELODRAMA

I wanted *Fire Will Come* to be a dry melodrama, with held back tears. In my writing, I tried to instill a stripped-down psychology, close to the bone: the emotional roughness of the characters matches the starkness of their environment. Their restrained emotions finally explode with the fire.

THE TREES

Eucalyptus is an invasive tree, some Galicians even find it pernicious and harmful. It dries out the soil and hampers the

growth of local plants.

In the opening scene of the film, enormous machines destroy eucalyptus trees one by one, without mercy, as if they were merely mowing the lawn. But suddenly the machines stop short in front of a huge hundred-year-old eucalyptus, as if in awe of its grandeur.

Fire Will Come shows the last remnants of a rural world that is threatened with extinction. The opening sequence with the eucalyptus tree and the closing one with the wildfire are similar symphonic movements that embody nature at death's door.

THE ANIMALS

Their deep, soft eyes scan us and question our humanity. They are the medium between the secular and the sacred, between reality and fiction. The looks of the dog, the cows, the goats or the burnt horse invite us in return to alter our own looks.

FATE

I really like the image of the violin and the case that holds it, because of what it says about the room for maneuver of human beings. This latitude is so tiny: no bigger than the space between the instrument and its case. Thus, Amador has no choice but to submit himself to determinism, or to some design beyond him.

Human beings are small creatures, overly submitted to a vast, unpredictable and uncontrollable nature. But in this film, human beings don't face up to nature, they don't defy it. They merge with it. They accept their roles, just like Amador, Benedicta and

their animals accept theirs. They are sovereign and free in their submission to nature.

The Galician title of the film, “O que Arde”; translates as “What burns”. There is something prophetic about the French title, “Viendra le feu” (Fire will come); it refers to fate, to some crepuscular intuition.

SHOOTING AT THE PACE OF SEASONS

In order to film a wildfire, you need to film with fire. We first had to go through the physical and theoretical training of firemen. We shot for a first summer with a small crew, without actors, to try things out and to appreciate what the film required of us. We didn’t know whether the super 16 film would warp with the heat, whether the lenses would melt, whether the firemen would let us come along... For a couple of weeks, we lay in wait. We kept the radio on: at the slightest fire alert, we followed the fire brigade and started shooting. Slowly but surely, we won their trust and respect.

Then, winter came... We filmed the rough living conditions that are shown at the beginning of the film. Gestures are slow, numb from the cold. Glances are downward are scarce. Amador is back, carrying his sorrows around along the sodden paths and under the rainy skies of Galicia. Galicia’s winter is Amador’s winter - his sanctuary.

Then springtime came. It was time for bodies to stretch and for the animals to be out in the open again. Nature went from contraction to dilation. Amador hurtled down the mountain

slopes to rescue his animals. Time had passed, seasons had come and gone, and one might think, like Amador, that redemption was possible, that some relief was to come.

The following summer, we were ready to renew the experience, this time with our actors, alongside two young firemen waiting for their baptism by fire, with neighbors trying to protect their properties from the fires to come... Only summer 2018 was one of the rainiest in the history of Galicia: there were very few wildfires. Once again, nature had set its own rules and tested our capacity for acceptance, our submission, our respect. Just when our two weeks of shooting were coming to an end, suddenly fire appeared.

It was a disturbing thing to await the fearsome flames. We wanted what Galicia cannot avert. Wanting fire is one thing, but fire still had to want us.





Oliver Laxe

Born in 1982, **Oliver Laxe** grew up between France, Spain and Morocco. His first two films screened at the Cannes Film Festival: ***You all are captains*** (FIPRESCI Prize, 2010 Directors' Fortnight) and ***Mimosas*** (Grand Prize, 2016 Critics' week). ***Fire Will Come***, his third feature, was shot in Galicia, the land of his ancestors.

cast

AMADOR ARIAS
BENEDICTA SÁNCHEZ
INAZIO ABRAO
ELENA FERNÁNDEZ
DAVID DE POSO
ALVARO DE BAZAL

crew

Script
OLIVER LAXE & SANTIAGO FILLOL

Director
OLIVER LAXE

Photography
MAURO HERCE

Editing
CRISTÓBAL FERNANDEZ

Sound
DAVID MACHADO, SERGIO DA SILVA, AMANDA VILLAVIEJA, XAVI SOUTO

Production
MIRAMEMIRA, 4 A 4 PRODUCTIONS, KOWALSKI FILMS, TARANTULA

Producers
ANDREA VÁZQUEZ, XAVI FONT, ANDREA QUERALT, MANI MORTAZAVI

Coproducers
KOLDO ZUAZUA, ELISE ANDRÉ, DONATO ROTUNNO

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