



OFFICIAL SELECTION
UN CERTAIN REGARD
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

Jirafa and Rouge-International
present

BONSÁI

A STORY OF LOVE, BOOKS AND PLANTS

Directed by Cristián Jiménez

WORLD PREMIERE

SCREENING DATES:

Saturday May 14 | 16.30 | Salle Debussy

Sunday May 15 | 11.00 | Salle Bazin

Tuesday May 17 | 14.00 | Salle Debussy

Running time 95 minutes

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CREW

Directed by: Cristián Jiménez

Written by: Cristián Jiménez

Based on the eponymous novel by Alejandro Zambra

Produced by: Bruno Bettati (Jirafa), Julie Gayet & Nadia Turincev (Rouge-International)

Co-Produced by: Natacha Cervi & Hernán Musaluppi, Pandora da Cunha Telles

Associated Producers: Étienne Mallet, David Gauquié, Julien Deris, Nicolás Lesage

Director of Photography: Inti Briones

Casting: Soledad Gaspar

Image: Inti Briones Direct

Sound: Manuel Robles

Sound design: Cristián Freund

Sound mix: Jean-Guy Véran

Art Director: Jorge Zambrano

Costume Designer: Mary Ann Smith

Image postproduction: Daniel Dávila

Sound postproduction: Cristián Freund

UPM: José Luis Rivas

A.D.: Waldo Salgado

Editor: Soledad Salfate

Original Music: Caroline Chaspoul & Eduardo Henríquez

With songs from: Pánico, Supersordo, Congelador, Emociones Clandestinas, Fiskales Ad Hoc, Tío Lucho.

Nationality: Chile-France-Argentina-Portugal

Length: 95'

Shoot format: RedOne

Exhibition format: DCP / 35 mm, color, dolby digital SRD

Window: 1: 1.85

Producers: Jirafa (Chile) www.jirafa.cl | Rouge-International (France) www.rouge-international.com

Co-Producers: Rizoma (Argentina) www.rizomafilms.com.ar | Ukbar filmes (Portugal)

Associated Producers: Zoofilms (Chile) / www.zoofilms.cl | Kiné-Imágenes (Chile) / www.kine-imágenes.cl
L90 Cine Digital (Chile) / www.l90cinedigital.cl | 4 Saisons Prod (France) / www.4saisons-prod.fr

CAST

Julio: Diego Noguera

Emilia: Natalia Galgani

Barbara: Gabriela Arancibia

Blanca: Trinidad González

Gazmuri: Hugo Medina

SYNOPSIS

Julio meets with Gazmuri, an established writer who needs someone to type up the manuscript of his latest novel. He ends up not getting the job. Instead of confessing this to Blanca - his neighbor and lover - he decides to make believe he is still transcribing Gazmuri's presumed novel, which he is actually writing himself. In need of a plot, Julio turns to the romance he had 8 years earlier with Emilia when both were studying literature in Valdivia.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

"The relationship between life and fiction is at the core of BONSAI. Fiction can take the shape of a lie, but also a narration, a forgery, a personal ritual or a pot containing and shaping a plant. A truly unfit person, Julio's way is a search for a personality which satisfies himself. On this path, he resists authenticity as much as he resists productivity, which puts him at odds with the current mood of Santiago de Chile. A film is not only a story, but also an artifact. In this case, I aspire for the bonsai to be not just a plot element, but also an inspiration for its style: synthetic, ascetic, focused in detail rather than context, and endowed with a significant degree of lightness."

Cristián Jiménez

BONSAI is the second feature directed by Cristián Jiménez, after "Optical Illusions", which premiered at San Sebastian 2009 and was shown in Japan, France, Sweden, Lithuania, India, Italy, Venezuela, Brazil, Poland, the United States, Australia and Germany. The film had a commercial release in France, England, Australia, Russia, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Hungary, Poland, the United States and Chile.

INTERVIEW WITH CRISTIÁN JIMÉNEZ

The general tonality of *Bonsai* is melancholy and romantic, but in contrast the male protagonist is a gawky and burlesque figure, a modern South American Buster Keaton...

One of the most difficult things for me with this film was to hit the right tone. The central story could be a drama or even a melodrama. Also, this is the first time I treat a love story in a serious way. Whether in my life or in my films sentiments have never been my thing. I believe that in contained emotion there is something much more intense and true than in emotions that are openly declared. Containing an emotion does not mean to eliminate, but only to filter, and every filter is porous by definition. The challenge was to inject a measure of levity into this drama, to filter it through a layer of humor but without losing the emotion, to achieve a blending of this humor with the juvenile romance and its self-contained forms of pain and anguish.

I really like this idea of a modern and South American Buster Keaton. I once read an article saying that Aki Kaurismäki was a mix of Buster Keaton and Bresson, and that made me laugh. I owe a lot Kaurismäki. But he loves nostalgia, and that is not true for me. That is why I did not want melancholy to be an enemy of the present. Even though the main character often seems transfixed in his perplexity, the hope for a future always remains alive. And caring for a bonsai is in a way a wager on the future.

What explains the strong contrast between the passionate, too close for comfort relationship Julio has with Emilia and the one with Blanca, in which he seems to choose not to invest himself? What is the nature of this relationship that does not seem to have any future at all?

Emilia is Julio's first love. Everything he experiences with her he experiences for the first time. You might think that what we see is an idealized version of this story; that is the way memory works. But I prefer to think that at the age of 20, love affairs are lived directly rather than idealized, especially if the lovers put such importance on the imaginary in their lives.

The relationship between Julio and Blanca is more contingent and fragile. They are neighbors who are at stages slightly different in their lives. Both certainly draw back from admitting what their relationship means for them, he perhaps more than she.

There is something practical in this relationship of mutual companionship. But that is exactly what permits Blanca to become the instrument that mobilizes Julio's memories and fears and pushes him towards what we suspect he has always wanted to do: to write.

I wouldn't say that Julio decides not to become too invested but rather that he completely refuses to take any decision at all and that he prefers to let himself be dragged along by events.

That is very much a South American attitude, but also a way of life that is put into question by the new political and economic ethics. Finally, beyond the differences between the relationships I would say that they are both in one another's shadow, so to speak. There could be no Emilia without Blanca and no Blanca without Emilia.

You decide not to show the parting and to maintain a sort of ambiguity about the reasons for it.

I think that the break-up between Julio and Emilia is a dark episode. That has to do with the forces and momentum of youth, with its visceral character.

All external manifestations that these people live out internally and that drive them towards separation are only weak echoes of something more profound and nebulous. In this sense, it seems to me there is no sense in making them explicit. I prefer the viewer to remain with the predominant sensation that they leave one another because they are young. On the other hand, Julio does not really understand why they separated and does not know how to transform the situation until he confronts his own desires. I find our hero's perplexity more important to describe than the psychological reasons that bring him to this rupture. And perhaps his desire to tell this love story derives from the same lack of answers.

Why did you choose to intersperse or alternate the two different levels of narration rather than putting them in sequence?

I am more interested in the contrast between the two times, two cities, two distinct moments in the life of a character, two women, two energies, two predominant colors, rather than the progressive accumulation of events of a single storyline.

I think that in this manner, one stays more interested in the search for differences and similarities between the young Julio and his adult version - the old problem of identity, of being or not being the same person little by little as the years pass. In life, time only has one direction: forward. But in fiction, luckily, a story can move both forward and backwards. And in this case, it allows us to have a new emotional charge with the passing of the years and the surfacing of a new point of view.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

CRISTIÁN JIMÉNEZ

Born in Valdivia, Chile, in 1975. Before becoming a filmmaker, Cristián Jiménez wrote short stories and studied sociology in Santiago, Heidelberg and London. As a child he dreamt of being a stand-up comedian. BONSAI is his second feature film, selected for the Cinéfondation Residence 2010. His previous works include:

2009: **ILUSIONES ÓPTICAS** (105', 35mm)

2009: **TIEMPO LIBRE** (23', digital)

2008: **199 RECETAS PARA SER FELIZ**,
co-writer and producer (92', 35mm)

2006: **XX** (10', 35mm)

2004: **EL TESORO DE LOS CARACOLES** (15', 35mm)

2003: **HONG KONG** (15', digital)

ABOUT THE CAST

DIEGO NOGUERA (JULIO)

Born in Santiago de Chile in 1982, Diego Noguera is an actor, theater director and composer. He has performed in such plays as "The Stable Brothers", "Cobain" and "Woyzeck", and directed, among others, 3 versions of Calderon de la Barca's "Life is a dream". He has also composed music for theater and film. Diego Noguera was the male lead of the movies "Turistas", by Alicia Scherson, "First day of winter", by José Luis Torres Leiva and now "Bonsai", by Cristián Jiménez.

NATALIA GALGANI (EMILIA)

Born in Santiago de Chile, Natalia Galgani graduated in 2008 from the Escuela Teatro Imagen theater academy under the supervision of Gustavo Meza. Following her graduation, she worked primarily as a dancer in various Chilean productions. In 2009, she was engaged as actress and assistant director in the theater production "Fiesta" which was invited to the official selection of the Iberoamerican Festival of Performing Arts Miradas in Santos, Brazil. "Bonsai" is her debut as a screen actress.

GABRIELA ARANCIBIA (BARBARA)

Born in Artofagasta, Chile, Gabriela Arancibia graduated from the theater academy of the University of Chile in 2009. Her principal teachers were Fernando González Mardones, Aliocha de la Sotta, Alexis Moreno and Marcos Guzmán. She currently works as an actress on the stage as well as in TV and cinema. She has also taught acting, focusing on physical and vocal work as well as on acting theory, at the Universidad de Playa Ancha, Valparaíso.

TRINIDAD GONZÁLEZ (BLANCA)

Trinidad González is an actress and founder of the company "Teatro en el Blanco" that has brought its productions "Neva" and "Diciembre" to more than 25 countries in the Americas, Asia and Europe. In 2007, she won the Altazor award as best actress for her work in "Neva". She also directed the productions "Fiesta" and "Insomnia". Currently, she works as actress, director and dramaturg of Teatro en el Blanco's new production, "La Reunión". Besides the stage, she has acted in several films such as "Pecados", "The Black Pimpernel", "Ausente" and "Quiero entrar". She also teaches acting at several academies and universities.

HUGO MEDINA (GAZMURI)

Hugo Medina will celebrate his 50th anniversary in theater this year with a production of King Lear. In his career, he has appeared in more than 100 theater productions in Latin America and Europe. He has acted in 25 films, 15 of them features, and innumerable TV programs and series. He was awarded the prize for best actor at the Film Festival San Sebastian for his role in "Prisionero desaparecido". In 2007, he won the Altazor award as best actor of the year and has just been nominated once again for this prestigious honor.

ABOUT THE BOOK “BONSAI” AND ITS AUTHOR

An international prizewinning sensation, BONSAI is the lightest, yet also the most complex, 90 pages you will read this year. Part story of a love affair (yet on the very first page writer Alejandro Zambra informs us "in the end she dies and he remains alone"), part metafictional game (the protagonist eventually starts to write a novel suspiciously similar to the one we're reading), and part meditation on how books are like bonsai trees (they both rely on containers to make sense), this book is perfect for a lengthy discussion. BONSAI has more metaphors and aphorisms than most books twice its length, and we'll have a great time discussing this book that had all of Chile reading. www.booksmith.com

ALEJANDRO ZAMBRA

Born in 1975, Alejandro Zambra is a Chilean writer. He has published the novels “Bonsai” (2006), “The Private Lives of Trees” (2007) and the forthcoming “Ways of Going Home” (2011). His books have been translated into French, English, Italian and Dutch among other languages. In 2010 he was selected as one of the best Spanish language novelists by Granta magazine. He has also published poetry and essays.

ABOUT THE MUSIC IN “BONSAI” AND ITS AUTHORS

Caroline Chaspoul and Eduardo Henriquez live and work in Paris. Founding members of franco-chilean indie rock band PÁNICO in the mid 90's, they released four albums and collaborated with several Chilean and Argentinian artists before they settled in Paris in the early 00's, from where three more Pánico albums get released. They recently composed the music for the experimental documentary FROM ROCK TO ETERNITY from directors James Schneider and Benjamin Echazarreta, shot in the Atacama desert, which gives them the definite push to start work with images; their collaboration for “Bonsai”, their first original soundtrack for a feature film, started when they met Cristián Jiménez in Paris. Since then, they have begun composing incidental music for a variety of film projects.