



COURT MÉTRAGE
compétition
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

soy tan feliz

a short film by Vladimir Durán

SERVO CINE / GALE CINE / IMAGINARIA FILMS WITH SUPPORT FROM PELUCA FILMS. SOY TAN FELIZ (ARGENTINA - COLOMBIA / 2011 / 14 MIN.)
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY VLADIMIR DURÁN STARRING JAIR SAID / IGNACIO SÁNCHEZ MESTRE / TOMÁS WICZ / MARIEL FERNÁNDEZ /
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synopsis.

Fragments of a Saturday winter day. The Vittenzein brothers are alone at their family house. Mateo stops by to pick up Bruno and Camilo and drive them to the country house where their mother awaits. A sudden break slam brings them into the intimacy of a waste land.

Bribes d'un samedi d'hiver. Les frères Vittenzein se retrouvent seuls dans la maison familiale. Mateo passe chercher Bruno et Camilo pour les emmener à la maison de campagne où les attend leur mère. Un arrêt imprévu les rapproche dans l'intimité d'un terrain vague.

the director's view.

An erratic pain is a chronic pain, which goes from one place to another having no fixed ground, and can be felt randomly yet on one part, yet on another part of the body.

I like to think that the few minutes that make up "Soy tan Feliz" are composed by erratic fragments of a winter Saturday spent together by a group of teenagers. Pieces of time, which feel as if disposed by mere chance, which do not compose a structured narrative, but reveal moments of introspection, emotional states in tiny details, bonds, desires and of course, deep pains.

I aim for the lights to turn on and off constantly. May what we are able to see be just portions of something much more broad. Something that can only be sensed, assuming the risks of an unpredictable narration that for moments may seem to drift, from a zigzagging and yes, erratic, process, in which prevails an intimate conflict which connects to the root of my own conflicts. Without any closure or conclusive turnabout. Just fragments.

le regard du réalisateur.

Une douleur erratique est une douleur chronique qui passe d'une zone à l'autre sans avoir de foyer fixe et qui se manifeste de manière aléatoire.

J'aime penser que les quelques minutes de 'Soy tan feliz' sont composées de fragments erratiques d'un samedi d'hiver entre adolescents. Morceaux de temps, choisis au hasard qui ne composent pas une ligne narrative structurée mais qui révèlent des moments d'introspection, états émotionnels, liens, désir et aussi de profondes douleurs.

Je cherche à ce que la lumière s'allume et s'éteigne sans arrêt. Que ce qu'on voit soit seulement des portions de quelque chose de beaucoup plus ample. Une chose qui puisse seulement être pressentie, en assumant le risque d'une narration imprédictible qui par moment puisse se sentir comme à la dérive, un devenir zigzaguant et en effet, erratique où la seule chose qui prédomine est un conflit intime connecté avec les racines de mes propres conflits. Sans conclusion, ni épilogue. Des fragments.

a view from outside. le regard du dehors.

Review

“Soy Tan Feliz”:
Haircuts and the
Cut of Love.

Article by

David Ranghelli

Associate Professor at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

The film Soy Tan Feliz by Vladimir Duran is a beautiful, visually compelling film which presents the spectator with a simple narrative carefully embedded in a richly layered composition of images which are suggestive of more complex content than the main storyline presents. This economy of images is the real pleasure that the short film can offer: each image must signify, however simply.

The film's opening sequence clearly imparts to the spectator the main subject of the film- the unvoiced desire of one male teenager for another. **But the story is told in a manner that gives us the feeling of pure cinema. The distinctive use of images is what draws us into the film, and into a story whose scope expands surprisingly as we watch it.**

The literal narrative is minimal; the full story, one of deep human emotion, is told through Duran's system of images. The carefully orchestrated use of mirrors and windows, the extreme juxtaposition of frame sizes, the reversing of negative and positive screen space from one side of the frame to the other in scene sequences, and the portrayal of apparently mundane activities among the film's five ambiguously related characters. These activities can finally be recognized as activities which echo the main action of the film (which will be discussed below). The motif of liquid is present in each section, and is used to chart the arc of events. Lastly, what is secretly compelling is Duran's development of the dynamics of desire through a system of characters observing each other, a system of looks and observation.

The main story concerns the desire that one young man (Bruno) has towards another young man who he knows (Mateo).

There are three main sections in the film. The first occurs in a hair salon (a “unisex” place; a mixed gender space), the second at Bruno’s home (a place of ambiguity in the relationships and activities of the characters), and the third in a roadside field (a wide open space of “play”, confusion, and (mis)interpretation).

In the beginning Bruno watches Mateo get a haircut at the salon; a military style “buzzcut”. The film opens with several shots of Bruno. He is first shown through an opaque haze of light, then in a series of sharper short shots with a documentary feel. In these shots our first liquid motif appears; a deliberate over discussion of hair gel. Bruno’s admiration is initially unclarified and ambiguous as we see the haircut, because Bruno is timid. But the story here is told visually, using a system of mirrors and windows. The two males are framed mostly apart, and when they are framed together it is their reflections we see, but reflected in separate mirrors: together yet apart. This is one of two haircut scenes which is central to the mediation of desire presented to us. Bruno is ejected from the salon by the narcissistic Mateo when Bruno lights a cigarette. He continues to watch from outside through a window pane, a glass barrier between the two, featuring photos of desirable hairstyles that we suppose clients want to “look like”; the salon is a site of the universal desire- the desire to be wanted- and the method, by imitating the standard styles in the photos. Bruno’s look says everything about his state of mind: his stare says he wants, but a certain timid blankness reflects his inertia, like the hazy light which enshrouds him in the film’s beginning.

When we get to Bruno’s house a surprise third participant enters this chain of desire. The scene opens with Camilo, a blonde boy (about 10 years old), who is watching TV. He has a serious, perplexed look which he wears through most of the film. In a wider shot we see he and Bruno are in a house together. He turns and gives Bruno, in the foreground, a long, serious look. Then he continues watching TV. Bruno is at the computer. He finishes (loses?) his game, and incidentally it is only now the title

appears, roughly 3:30 into the film: Soy Tan Feliz. Camilo’s look at his brother defines an interplay in the second section, which manifests itself in the third section at the field where the only characters are Bruno, Mateo and the observing Camilo.

The second section at Bruno’s house is quite wonderful, giving us both a clear course of action by Bruno and scenes which playfully echo his action, while building up a certain tension through their randomness and variations in frame size and focal length. After being shown Eduardo’s tattoo (like a “prisoner”) by Andrea, Bruno goes up to the bathroom. Mateo arrives at the pool. Bruno sees everyone at poolside through another closed window, where both he and the audience have a clear view. They are still separated by a class barrier. The water motif reappears throughout this scene. Bruno washing at the sink. The others at the poolside, playing. In opposition to the gel, which “fixes” thing (hair) in place, the water in this section seems to suggest fluidity and playfulness. The others dunk their hair in the pool, Bruno showers, as a prelude to his transformative, decisive act: he cuts his own hair, by himself, all alone. This is intercut with short moments of the games and hanging around of the other four characters. Camilo is framed with Mateo in most of these scenes, often happily, including the last shot of the section where they are lying down together.

These images give us a “home movie”- slice of life feeling. The shots and scenes are not causally connected, but rather float in quiet juxtaposition against each other. The presence of water underscores this. We are subtly presented with a scheme of parallel action, Andrea painting her toenails, people making funny faces or gestures, the young boys doing a tap dance together, intercut with the lackadaisical Bruno ponderously giving himself a sloppy buzzcut, which further demonstrates both his admiration of and desire for Mateo. But it is a lonely haircut.

If we consider the haircuts as efforts to adorn the self, or to mark the self, all the other characters follow this course of ac-

tion, echoing Bruno's haircut, except one: Bruno's brother Camilo (about 10). The girl (his sister Andrea) painted her toenails, and another young boy (Eduardo, also about 10) is tattooed, like in jail. Camilo is playful, but still observant.

The next and climactic scene in the film returns us to the motif of glass, mirrors and windows as an important motif. When the two boys and Camilo are in the car we see them from the position of the windshield, through the windshield. The three males are united in this space.

Water is again introduced, but its valence has changed. Camilo gives Bruno an open bottle of water which spills on Bruno. Mateo knocks even more water on him. Bruno punches Mateo. Suddenly Mateo stops the car and he and Bruno run out, with an air of urgency disconcerting to Camilo. They wrestle in a roadside field. They leave Camilo alone and confused. In fact the scenes of Camilo walking along the highway are alarming, and create an alternate tension to what is happening on the grass, where Bruno and Mateo are now together; no mirrors, no glass barriers. Bruno and Mateo enter into a confused mixture of roughhousing and foreplay, and Bruno is now quite aggressive; Mateo resistant. Without his hair Bruno too becomes brusque.

Meanwhile Camilo studies a roadside altar with a statue of the virgin protected by glass when we hear the sound of a cellphone ringing. In the car answers it. We learn his mother is calling. Why is she calling now? This is a point of great interest as it brings on the ending of the film. Camilo calls Bruno to come. Bruno has been trying to become intimate with Mateo, but Mateo stops their encounter and leaves Bruno lying on the grass, and the story ends. After Camilo answered the phone, no one attends the phonecall.

Why a call from mother? Adults have been absent from the film so far. Mother as absence? What functions does the call serve? Perhaps it is part of a humorous juxtaposition of the Virgin with the

homoerotic tussle playing out in the field, interrupted by a mother's intervention? Mother as authority figure: "playtime" is over for the boys? Mother in response to taboo; to some kind of incestuousness? Mother as omniscience? Mother as a source of comfort for Camilo as she ends the confused behavior he observes, or perhaps that he feels, but cannot process? If we have tuned into Camilo's presence throughout the film, to his appearance and his reactions, we may ask ourselves to what extent he is placed alongside Bruno at the center of the film's portrayal of desiring.

The opening shots of the film's first two sections clue us about isolation, confusion and desire as related to both Bruno and Camilo. The flow of images and the act of spectatorship (the watching by characters of others within the film) suggests a triangle of mediated desires. Bruno watches Mateo. Bruno copies Mateo, perhaps hoping to signify that they are alike; that they are or should be one. Mateo, when watching at all, stares at himself narcissistically in the salon mirror (or wants Bruno to get his permission for haircuts). Camilo watches them both. **If we dignify all of Duran's images, the rest is a poetry of ambiguity.** We are left without the closure the traditional narrative film dictates to us. In this way **the beauty of the film masks the uncertainty of events, of the state of the relationships between the main characters, and of what resonances the interactions between Bruno and Mateo have for Camilo. In a way the film seems to be as much about Camilo's spectatorship and his perplexed responses, as it is about the two older boys.**

For this viewer the film offers a nexus of moments and emotions are ambiguously rich. Something in the film may touch the spectator; who may not be sure what exactly it is. That is the beauty of the storytelling aesthetics Vladimir Duran uses in Soy Tan Feliz. The images signify poetically, through their beauty, their structure, the openness of their signification, and their discreetness.

director



Vladimir Durán was born in Bogotá, Colombia. He studied Anthropology at Université de Montréal, and Film Directing at Universidad del Cine de Buenos Aires. He also studied acting and directing actors with Marketa Kimbrell, Nora Moseinco and Claudio Tolcachir. He works as a commercial director in Latin America and Europe, where he has won several awards in the most important advertising festivals.

His short film “Soy tan feliz” was selected as part of the Official Competition at 2011 Cannes Film Festival and won Best Short Film Award at the 13th Buenos Aires International Independent Film Festival/ BAFICI 2011.

Vladimir Durán est né à Bogota en Colombie. Il a étudié l'Anthropologie à l'Université de Montréal, Réalisation à La Universidad del Cine à Buenos Aires ainsi qu'Art Dramatique et Direction d'acteur avec Marketa Kimbrell, Nora Moseinco et Claudio Tolcachir. En parallèle il travaille comme réalisateur de films publicitaires dans plusieurs pays d'Amérique et d'Europe et a obtenu de nombreux prix dans les festivals les plus importants de publicité.

Son court métrage ‘Soy tan Feliz’ a été sélectionné en compétition officielle au Festival de Cannes 2011 et a été primé ‘Meilleur Court Métrage’ à la 13ème édition du Festival Internacional de Cinéma Independant de Buenos Aires/ BAFICI 2011.



**cast
/ crew**

Bruno
Iair Said

Mateo
Ignacio Sánchez Mestre

Camilo
Tomás Wicz

Andrea
Mariel Fernández

Eduardo
Lautaro Noriega

Written and Directed by
Vladimir Durán

Executive Producers
Victoria Galardi
Vladimir Durán
Alexis Durán

Director of Photography
Julián Ledesma

Art Directors
Natalia Krieger
Eugenia Lestard

Line Producers
Flor Clérico
Mariano Scarpatti
Mara Paulon
Marcelo Acosta

With support from
Peluca Films
Fabio Cimmarusti
Alejandro Di Michele.

Editors
Valeria Racioppi
Alejandro Broderson
Diego Nuñez Irigoyen
Vladimir Durán

Assistant Directors
Flor Clérico
Lucho Zazzarino
Nacho Gaggero

Postproduction Company
Cinecolor Argentina.

Sound Designer
Tres Sonido (Argentina)
Bechen de Loredo



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